



WP2

D2.1: Literature Review Report and Key Recommendations



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rEdESIGN

Fostering social entrepreneurship
in rural areas for sustainable
food systems

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D2.1 – LITERATURE REVIEW REPORT AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
VET	Vocational Education and Training
EC	European Commission
ECTE	European Centre in Training for Employment
CCSEV	Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Services of Sevilla
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
WP	Work Package
ROC	Region of Crete
G.A.L	G.A.L. METROPOLI EST

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FOREWORD

This document outlines the deliverables for Work Package 2 (WP2) of the rEdESIGN project, which focuses on Literature Review and Knowledge Gathering. The project aims to boost cooperation between social businesses in rural areas within the agri-food sector across Crete, Sicily, and Andalusia. The document includes an Executive Summary, Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Key Recommendations.

Deliverables of Work Package 2 (WP2):

- **Deliverable 2.1 – Literature Review Report:** This report summarizes the results of a literature review process on relevant literature, reports, and recent EU projects related to social economy and social innovation in rural communities. It includes information sources such as EU documents, project reports, policy documents, and academic research.
- **Deliverable 2.2 – Key Recommendations Document:** This document provides key recommendations for good practices in the social economy within the agri-food sector in rural areas. It focuses on strategies that enhance collaboration, capacity building, and the overall resilience of rural economies.
- **Deliverable 2.3 – Good Practices Database:** This deliverable involves collecting and collating good practices specific to the social economy within the agri-food sector in partner countries. The database includes successful social initiatives, innovation in social entrepreneurship, integration and cooperation among producers, and governance solutions.
- **Deliverable 2.4 – Analysis and Synthesis Report:** This report analyzes and synthesizes the good practices collected, focusing on innovation in tools, methodologies, outputs, results, transferability, and sustainability. It includes a comparative overview of successful social enterprises and a detailed comparative analysis of innovative services, processes, and outputs.
- **Deliverable 2.5 – Case Studies/Report:** This deliverable develops case studies based on the collected good practices, providing in-depth examples of successful initiatives.

The document also provides background information about the rEdESIGN project, its



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consortium, and its objectives. It emphasizes the importance of social economy and social innovation in promoting economic growth, fighting poverty and social exclusion, and fostering rural social entrepreneurship. The methodology section details the information sources used, including EU projects, EU reference documents, academic literature, private initiatives, and regional programs. The results section highlights the outcomes of the reviewed literature, focusing on how to innovate in rural development.

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ABOUT THE rEdESIGN PROJECT

The project rEdESIGN is aiming to boost the cooperation between social businesses on rural areas active in the agri-food sector in regions of Crete (Greece), Sicily (Italy) and Andalusia (Spain), through the building a European network of regional and local authorities with converging priorities on social economy and creating space and opportunities at EU level for learning and collaboration.

The consortium has been built to ensure the achievement of foreseen results in the most cost-effective way, while at the same time covering the diverse needs of the target groups in terms of content developed and activities implemented. It consists of seven partners. It includes one regional government, two local government Bodies, one Chamber of Commerce one VET one developmental agency, and one structural developmental body.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is a deliverable of the rEdESIGN project, funded under the Call: SMP-COSME-2023-RESILIENCE under grant agreement No 101169928.

The aim of this document is to summarise the results of a literature review process on relevant literature, reports, and recent EU projects related to social economy and social innovation in rural communities. This review aims to gather a wide range of information from the following sources:

- EU documents: communications, recommendations and in force EU legislation
- Project reports and policy documents
- Academic research

LINKS WITH OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Several work packages are being prepared under the umbrella project « Fostering social entrepreneurship in rural areas for sustainable food systems » (acronym: rEdESIGN) between 2024 and 2026. The work plan has been organized into six Work Packages (including transversal WPs such as Project Management and

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Dissemination) that have been kept lean and focused on specific strands of activities

- Work Package 1 – Management & Administration
- Work Package 2 – Literature Review and Knowledge Gathering
- Work Package 3 – Network Development and Capacity Building
- Work Package 4 – Onsite Visits and Hands-on Training
- Work Package 5 – Policy Recommendations
- Work Package 6 – Dissemination, Exploitation, Communication (DEC)

This report has been prepared as the first of five deliverables of Work Package 2 – Literature Review and Knowledge Gathering

- Deliverable 2.1 – Literature review report
- Deliverable 2.2 – Key recommendations document
- Deliverable 2.3 – Good practices Database
- Deliverable 2.4 – Analysis and Synthesis Report
- Deliverable 2.5 – Case Studies/Report

This report is comprehensive report summarizing the findings of the literature review on social economy practices in rural agri-food sectors. The report outcomes will directly feed next WP2 tasks.

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LITERATURE REVIEW REPORT

Project context

The European Commission, to promote a highly competitive social market economy, has placed the social economy and social innovation at the heart of its concerns, in terms of promoting economic growth and fighting against poverty and social exclusion (Communication from the Commission 2011, Social Business Initiative). With the Social Economy Action Plan, (December 2021), the Commission puts forward concrete measures to help mobilise the full potential of the social economy sector. Moreover, the updated EU industrial strategy in May 2021, identified Proximity and Social economy among the 14 industrial ecosystems relevant for recovery post-COVID, resilience, and the twin green and digital transitions.

The capacity to foster rural social entrepreneurship, and enabling institutional frameworks that support community action, has been stressed as elements that empowers local communities and actors to be more resilient. In this regard, social enterprises have been identified as organisations that contributes to social inclusion and local development through social innovation, therefore providing new goods and/or services to meet community needs, boosts a more sustainable green and digital transition, and fosters inclusive social and governance relations.

The underdevelopment of support networks providing suitable business development services for social economy organisations, constitutes a serious obstacle for the development of the sector of the EU economy (study for Social Economy of the Directorate General for internal policies of the European Parliament, 2016). Sharing regional and local good practices developed by such kind of social entities, enterprises, and SMEs is a pre-requisite for an efficient rural transition towards sustainable agriculture.

Putting in place the cooperation between social businesses locally and internationally is therefore crucial to fostering social entrepreneurship in rural areas for sustainable food systems.

Indeed, only when social economy entrepreneurs work together and in partnership with public authorities, at the regional, national, and transnational levels, are they well-placed to co-create new products and services and to achieve a greater collective impact.



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Purpose of the Literature Review Report

The aim of this report is to perform an overview of existing materials from recent EU projects on social economy and social innovation for the resilience of rural communities.

Alignment with Needs: This objective directly addresses the need (#SN1) for a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge, recommendations, and good practices in the field of social economy and social innovation. It recognizes the importance of building upon previous successes and avoiding duplication of efforts.

Methodology

The sources consulted to produce the reports are listed and described in this section. It is also presented how the information has been extracted and analysed.

The information sources have been categorised in six main groups:

- EU projects
- EU reference documents
- Academic Literature
- Private initiatives
- Regional Programs
- Academic Research

Information sources

European Projects

The EU allocates funding to a wide range of projects that aim to promote collaboration, innovation, and development across its member states. These projects play a crucial role in achieving the EU's objectives in various fields such as research, culture, sustainability, etc. In concrete, this Literature review focuses on European projects within the agri-food sector in rural areas and social economy. In total, 43 projects have been analysed.

EU reference documents

This section selects relevant EU policies, initiatives, strategic plans, and communications by the EC has launched in the recent past regarding the social economy and the agri-food sector.

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Several selected EU reference documents as part of their Literature review compilation.

Academic Literature

A literature review compiles and assesses existing research and evidence on a topic of interest. Two partners have included references to academic literature previous works.

Private initiatives

The private sector is a key engine for economic growth and transformation, given its capacity to create jobs, support productivity, and innovate, as illustrated in Figure. In doing so, it contributes to poverty reduction and inclusive socio-economic development. In this context, one partner has selected four private initiatives to contribute to the literature review task-

Regional Programs

As mentioned above, it means the regional coordination is delivered more effectively or automatically on a regional basis. ROC has selected a concrete example of a regional program implemented in the Region of Crete.

Template for the Literature Review

For the literature review template, THE OFFICIAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND SHIPPING OF SEVILLE created a template so every partner could successfully compile the literature review. The purpose of this task is to ensure that the project team has access to a comprehensive set of knowledge and information regarding social economy practices in the agri-food sector within rural communities. It forms the foundation for subsequent tasks, so it was a priority to make sure that the table proposed meets certain requirements.

This is the scheme that has been used:

- Website:
- Bibliographic reference:
- Partner in charge of this document:
- Summary of the document:

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- Is this document useful for the task regarding the compilation of good practices?
- Is this document useful for the final recommendations?
- Is this document based on the analysis of a European project?

Limitations of the Literature Review

Even when this task addresses a broad variety of works collected from the main sources of information, constraints and limited access means that some relevant results may have not been included. Moreover, although the literature on this subject is quite abundant, the number of studies has also a high geographical dispersion. Every partner has focused mainly on the projects/policies affecting to their region.

Results

Once defined the study subject in Section 1 and detailed the methodology followed in Section 2, the primary purpose of this section is to share the outcomes of the reviewed literature in the agri-food sector.

These programs show how to innovate in rural development in a thorough and coordinated manner. Multi-stakeholder cooperation, an emphasis on sustainability (economic and environmental), the empowerment of underserved populations, and the use of education and technology to increase impact are among the common themes. Through their practical demonstration of effectiveness in capacity building, cross-sector collaboration, environmental sustainability, digital transformation, social inclusion, business model innovation, and policy advocacy, they collectively form a strong network of socially innovative enterprises that are promoting systemic change in rural and peripheral areas throughout Europe.

All the projects have given people and communities more power and have used digital tools and international collaboration to produce scalable, long-lasting solutions.

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The social economy plays a pivotal role in fostering inclusive, sustainable development, particularly in rural areas. Within the agri-food sector, this approach has the potential to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities, such as economic isolation, environmental sustainability, and social inequalities. The recommendations presented in this document are designed to guide the development of good practices for social economy initiatives within the agri-food sector, focusing on strategies that enhance collaboration, capacity building, and the overall resilience of rural economies.

By leveraging best practices drawn from various European regions, this document outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at strengthening community involvement, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and supporting innovation through digital tools. These strategies aim to improve access to funding, enhance market opportunities, and ensure the long-term success of social enterprises in rural areas. The following sections delve into specific recommendations that can drive positive change in rural communities, contributing to both social and economic development in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Key Recommendation for Good Practices in the Social Economy within the Agri-Food Sector in Rural Areas

This section outlines strategies to improve the sustainability and efficiency of the agri-food sector in rural areas, focusing on fostering collaborative partnerships and supporting localized value chains. These practices are essential for creating equitable opportunities and improving both social and environmental outcomes in rural communities.

The social economy in the agri-food sector plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable rural development, social inclusion, and economic resilience. To enhance its impact, the following good practices should be adopted:

- Encouraging Cooperative Models: Farmer and producer cooperatives can strengthen local economies by pooling resources, sharing risks, and



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increasing market access. Policies should support cooperative formation, training, and financial incentives.

- **Promoting Short Supply Chains and Local Markets:** Direct sales through farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and digital platforms increase producer revenue, reduce carbon footprints, and enhance consumer trust. Rural policies should facilitate infrastructure for these markets.
- **Supporting Social Enterprises and Innovation:** Social enterprises focusing on sustainable agriculture, food waste reduction, and rural employment can drive social and economic progress. Grants, microfinance, and incubation programs should be made available to encourage innovation.
- **Enhancing Education and Skills Development:** Training programs on agroecology, digital tools, and sustainable farming practices empower rural communities. Collaboration between governments, universities, and NGOs can ensure effective knowledge transfer.
- **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships:** Partnerships between governments, businesses, and community organizations can boost investments in rural agri-food projects, improving infrastructure, logistics, and market access.
- **Promoting Environmental Sustainability:** Practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and regenerative agriculture contribute to biodiversity conservation and soil health. Policy incentives should reward farmers adopting these methods.
- **Ensuring Social Inclusion and Fair Wages:** Equal opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized groups in agri-food businesses should be promoted through inclusive policies, fair wages, and social protection measures.

The collaboration among local farmers, cooperatives, and social enterprises is essential to create sustainable agricultural systems. Localized value chains benefit communities by ensuring fair wages, reducing environmental impacts, and fostering economic growth. The promotion of agroecological practices plays a pivotal role in this process, ensuring that farming methods are not only productive but also environmentally sustainable. To achieve long-term success, it is crucial to provide capacity-building initiatives that focus on sustainable farming, digital tools, and

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business management. Moreover, inclusive social impact initiatives that engage marginalized groups such as women, youth, and migrant workers ensure that no one is left behind in the value chain. This holistic approach creates a resilient agri-food system, which strengthens the rural economy and provides equitable benefits for all stakeholders.

Strengthen Community Involvement and Local Ownership

The importance of community involvement in social economy projects cannot be overstated. When people feel a sense of ownership over projects, their commitment and participation increase, leading to long-term success and sustainability.

Strengthening community involvement in social economy projects ensures that local stakeholders have a say in the decision-making processes. It is crucial to empower local communities by involving them in the governance of social enterprises, ensuring that projects cater to the specific needs and interests of the population. This can be achieved through local ownership models where rural residents manage and operate the enterprises, enhancing both the economic and social resilience of the area.

In addition, the literature review revealed a strong consensus on the importance of engaging local communities in the development of the social economy. In Romania, people expressed the belief that the local community should play a more active role in shaping the future of the social economy. Similar views were in Greece and Germany, where people emphasized the value of local knowledge and community-driven initiatives in fostering sustainable development.

One particularly notable finding from Spain was the call for initiatives that would integrate the social economy more deeply into regional policies, including rural development, public procurement, and support for social enterprises. These respondents pointed to the need for stronger community involvement in policy design and implementation, which would help to ensure that social economy activities are aligned with local needs and priorities.

Enhancing community engagement through educational programmes and public awareness campaigns were noticed as essential in promoting the social economy's role in addressing regional challenges. Additionally, fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors can drive innovation and create more sustainable



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opportunities for growth in sectors such as agriculture, cultural tourism, and youth empowerment.

Best practices have been seen in Spain and Italy, where rural community-based organizations have successfully created local enterprises. These initiatives have led to better employment opportunities, skill development, and enhanced social cohesion. Encouraging such models should be a priority, as they enable rural communities to manage and sustain their development.

Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration

Creating partnerships between various sectors, including social enterprises, local governments, businesses, and civil society, can lead to more effective and efficient solutions for rural development.

Collaboration across sectors brings together diverse knowledge, expertise, and resources, which are necessary for addressing the unique challenges of rural areas. Public-private partnerships can help rural social enterprises gain access to critical funding, resources, and networks, enabling them to scale their impact. In France, for instance, cross-sector collaborations have led to more effective market access, while also enabling enterprises to develop more robust supply chains.

The role of strong networks and partnerships was another recurring theme. There are some good practices in Germany, for instance, where the literature reviewed the importance of networks such as the Centre for Open Social Innovation and other university initiatives in supporting the social economy. Similarly, in other countries as Latvia and Poland, considered strong partnerships between SESs, government bodies, and other stakeholders to be vital in facilitating collaboration, resource sharing, and mutual support. This view was also shared in Belgium, where partnerships were seen as essential for overcoming challenges related to finance and regulatory issues.

Strong cross-sector collaboration via community networks were highlighted as a key asset, facilitating collaboration between social enterprises and local stakeholders. The review was highlighted the importance of community engagement and collaboration among stakeholders to promote the growth of social enterprises.



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Strong community networks, supported by collaborations between local social businesses and government bodies, were recognized as key drivers of success. Public-private partnerships were also seen as effective in advancing regional environmental and social projects. The region’s agricultural sector, driven by cooperative models, has also benefited from the support and involvement of the local community. Despite the diversity in regional contexts and economic environments, these common challenges suggest that systemic issues are at play, which need to be addressed through targeted policy interventions and cross-regional collaboration.

However, in many regions, such networks are either underdeveloped or fragmented. Stakeholders in many Member States called for more formalised collaborations between SEEs and government agencies, as well as greater engagement from the private sector in supporting social economy initiatives. Strengthening these networks could foster a more supportive ecosystem for SEEs, facilitating innovation, resource-sharing, and coordinated action across sectors.

As a good practice on Cross-Sector Collaboration was the establishing regular forums for dialogue and collaboration among social enterprises, government agencies, regional institutions, private sector companies, and NGOs. These forums can facilitate the sharing of best practices, coordination of efforts, and identification of common goals. For instance, local collaborations among businesses, social enterprises, and government bodies were seen as key enablers, particularly in sectors like agriculture and cultural tourism. There some good in some regions as Latvia, Spain and Germany were municipalities actively engaged with social enterprises to provide guidance and financial aid, fostering collaboration between SEEs and local governments.

Additionally, these partnerships encourage the exchange of ideas and innovation, which helps rural areas stay competitive in the global economy. To optimize cross-sector collaboration, it is important to establish clear communication channels and ensure that all parties involved share common objectives.

Support Capacity Building and Skills Development

Investing in training programs that build local leadership and entrepreneurial skills is critical to the success of social enterprises in rural areas.

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Effective capacity building ensures that rural communities are equipped with the necessary skills to manage and grow social enterprises. Training in areas such as business management, sustainable agriculture, and digital marketing can empower local leaders to make informed decisions that contribute to the longevity of their initiatives. In the UK, rural training initiatives have been successful in enhancing the skills of local entrepreneurs, enabling them to grow their projects and increase their impact on both the local economy and social fabric.

The literature review revealed that training and capacity-building programs were highlighted as essential in regions such as Romania, Latvia, and Bulgaria. In these regions was pointed out the importance of educational initiatives that build the skills and knowledge of social entrepreneurs, enabling them to better navigate the challenges of starting and growing a social enterprise. These programs also help raise awareness about the social economy, making it more accessible to new participants. In Greece, training and capacity-building were also seen as crucial, particularly for expanding the sector and improving its visibility among both entrepreneurs and the public. Moreover, the importance of experience exchange, peer learning, and capacity-building initiatives were pointed out as essential components of a thriving social economy ecosystem.

The review showed the lack of consistent capacity-building programs to enhance entrepreneurial skills and market recognition. In Spain (Extremadura (ES)), for instance, a major barrier is the general lack of understanding and recognition of the social economy model. Focus group participants also mentioned difficulties in accessing broader markets and financial constraints as significant hurdles for the growth and sustainability of social enterprises.

Training and capacity-building programs, supportive policies, and public awareness initiatives were also emphasized as crucial enablers. In Rhine-Neckar, Germany reported the substantial support for capacity- building programmes and policy frameworks, public awareness and recognition of social enterprises remain inadequate, limiting the overall impact of existing policies.

In the study of significant number of EU projects, there is a widespread need for capacity-building programs aimed at strengthening the skills, knowledge, and operational capabilities of social entrepreneurs. In addition, many regions gave



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emphasis to the critical need for training programs that can help SEEs navigate financial, managerial, and regulatory challenges.

Especially, capacity-building is important for newer or smaller SEEs that may lack the resources to develop internal expertise in key areas such as business development, financial planning, and compliance. Across the board, stakeholders called for targeted initiatives that would provide social entrepreneurs with the tools they need to grow and succeed, including workshops, mentorship programs, and peer learning opportunities.

The review made clear that implementing joint capacity-building programs involving multiple stakeholders to enhance the skills and knowledge of social entrepreneurs and public sector employees. These programs can focus on areas such as management, finance, marketing, and legal compliance to support the growth and sustainability of social enterprises.

Capacity-Building and Education: Across regions, stakeholders emphasized the need for more educational initiatives focused on social entrepreneurship. Governments and social economy organizations should prioritize training and capacity-building programs, which are essential to equipping social entrepreneurs with the skills they need to grow and sustain their enterprises. These initiatives are particularly important in regions with low levels of awareness about the social economy.

By offering targeted programs tailored to the specific needs of rural communities, it becomes possible to nurture a new generation of social economy leaders who can overcome local challenges and adapting to changing market conditions.

Leverage Digital Tools and Innovation

Digital tools have the potential to greatly expand the reach and effectiveness of social enterprises in rural areas, particularly by breaking down geographical barriers.

The adoption of digital technologies in rural areas can facilitate market access, knowledge sharing, and collaborations with other organizations. Digital platforms have been successfully used in Germany to connect rural social enterprises with national and international partners, expanding their visibility and market reach. This has opened new opportunities for rural businesses to diversify their revenue streams

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and increase their competitiveness.

To remain competitive and sustainable, social enterprises need to embrace innovation and digitalization. Future policies should include dedicated funding for digital capacity-building and innovation-driven projects, helping SEEs navigate technological changes and tap into emerging markets, particularly in rural or underserved regions.

Infrastructure deficiencies, such as limited transportation and digital connectivity, further restrict scalability. The review showed that the most European rural areas face the marginalization due to the lack of digital access that is the core of social entrepreneurship and networking.

Policy reforms, such as reducing paperwork requirements, digitizing application processes, or providing dedicated administrative support for SEEs, will allow social enterprises to focus more on their social missions than to the huge volume of bureaucracy.

Furthermore, digital tools can assist in improving operational efficiency, enabling enterprises to reach new customers and offer innovative services. By promoting the integration of digital solutions, rural enterprises can benefit from reduced isolation and greater access to global markets.

Ensure Access to Funding and Financial Support

Rural social enterprises often struggle to secure adequate financial resources. Tailored funding mechanisms are essential to overcome this challenge.

Access to funding is one of the most significant barriers faced by social enterprises in rural areas. Traditional funding models often overlook the unique challenges of rural enterprises, such as geographic isolation and smaller market sizes. Therefore, specialized financial support, including grants, microfinancing, and social impact investing, must be developed to cater to the needs of these enterprises.

Access to funding and investment was highlighted as a critical enabler across many regions as in Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Poland were identified the access to finance as a key factor for promoting the social economy. In addition, were emphasized that financial resources are necessary to support the startup and growth

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phases of social enterprises, as well as to provide the stability needed for long-term sustainability. In Spain, financial support was also seen as necessary, although the perception was that it remains insufficient in many cases.

Flexible funding mechanisms that would make it easier for social enterprises to access resources and support are crucial for the development of social economy in agrifood sector and more streamlined administrative processes and enhanced funding mechanisms to support social enterprises are required.

Some local authorities (municipalities) have developed a social enterprise funding scheme to facilitate employment and social inclusion of vulnerable groups but the promoting social inclusion and sustainable development remain inadequate and the bureaucratic hurdles and funding constraints remain significant challenges.

There is also a strong need for enhanced financial mechanisms, including easier access to European funds and local funding initiatives. The reviewing revealed the necessity for better regulatory frameworks at local, national and EU framework. In many areas the funding mechanisms and public funding is either limited or difficult to access due to bureaucratic complexity including the lack of knowledge using such supporting funding mechanism.

The European Rural Development Program has demonstrated success in allocating funds to rural social enterprises in Poland, helping them implement innovative solutions and enhance their social impact. By developing tailored financial support mechanisms, rural enterprises can access the capital needed to scale and thrive.

Promote Policy and Regulatory Support

A favorable policy environment is crucial for the growth and sustainability of social enterprises in rural areas.

Advocating for policies that support rural social enterprises can help create a conducive environment for their growth. Policies such as tax incentives, streamlined regulations, and subsidies for rural-specific projects can reduce the operational burden on social enterprises and incentivize new initiatives. In Sweden, local governments have introduced policies that reduce regulatory hurdles and provide financial incentives for rural social enterprises, fostering their growth and success.

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To ensure the sustainability of these initiatives, it is essential that policymakers work with rural stakeholders to understand their needs and challenges. This approach can lead to more effective policy interventions that support the long-term success of rural social enterprises.

Results

In conclusion, the recommendations provided in this document offer a comprehensive blueprint for strengthening the social economy within the agri-food sector in rural areas. By fostering collaborative partnerships, supporting local ownership, and leveraging digital innovation, rural communities can build more resilient and sustainable social enterprises. The importance of capacity building, tailored financial support, and favorable policy environments cannot be overstated, as they create the conditions necessary for these initiatives to thrive.

The successful implementation of these strategies will not only enhance the economic viability of rural areas but also promote social inclusion and environmental sustainability. As such, it is crucial for policymakers, local stakeholders, and social enterprises to collaborate and implement these practices, ensuring that rural areas remain vibrant, equitable, and well-equipped to meet future challenges. Through these efforts, rural communities can foster long-term social innovation, creating opportunities for growth and improving quality of life for generations to come.

GOOD PRACTICES DATABASE

In this task, the project team has actively collected and collated good practices that are specific to the social economy within the agri-food sector in partner countries. Good practices have included the following aspects:

Successful social initiatives in rural economy sectors

- a) Initiatives fostering innovation, cooperation and development of the knowledge and advisory services in the sectors of Horeca and Agro products.
- b) Innovation of Social Entrepreneurship for agri-food enterprises restructuring and modernisation

Integration and cooperation

- c) among producers in agro-food sectors and
- d) other sectors (education, tourism) facilitating diversification and safeguarding of rural traditions, natural heritage, and landscapes.

Relevance of processes

- e) Participatory approaches - networks and social partnerships - including public or private investments

Relevance

- f) Governance solutions to political/strategic contexts through positive transformation of businesses, learning tools and capacity building.

Innovative outputs

- g) Degree of effectiveness and efficiency in producing outputs and outcomes.
- h) transferability of results or to scale it up to other contexts/settings/countries
- i) develop policy recommendations
- j) sustainability maintained in the long-term with available funds or human resources.

As the excel file is quite long and contains lot of data, it is attached as an annex.

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ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF GOOD PRACTICES

Comparative overview of successful social enterprises

The analysis and synthesis of the good practices (GPs) selected by the rEdESIGN partners assess various factors that have determined the overall success of the initiatives. These factors span multiple dimensions, that, according to the rEdESIGN scope, we evaluate following the key topic of Innovation:

- Innovative tools and methodologies applied for Problem Solving - the GPs highlight the relevance of innovative products or services crucial for addressing the unique challenges faced by rural areas, such as economic isolation, limited access to services, and environmental sustainability.
- Innovative outputs and results: analyzing their effectiveness and efficiency to find practical solutions to unforeseen challenges or obstacles.
- Their transferability and sustainability: highlighting their compliance with overall policies, regulatory requirements, or legal frameworks, to allow their replication in other contexts and maintain the found solutions in the long-term.

The GPs described are diverse in their geographical context, target groups, and specific goals. However, they share several common aspects of innovation, particularly in domains of education and training, social inclusion, sustainable development, and community empowerment. The recurring themes and innovative aspects across the analyzed initiatives are summarized as follows:

1. Innovative Services

1.1. Education and training and information Services: they are initiatives improving general awareness and or professional skills. Some projects introduce innovative learning practices in integration of different sectors, such as health services, organic farming, agroecology, or sustainable land management. These training activities help rural communities increase agricultural productivity while preserving the local economy and environment.

1.2. Digital and ICT Services: The use of technology to connect rural communities to broader markets and services is a key innovation in many projects. Some of them include innovative online platforms for selling locally-



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produced goods, telemedicine services, digital education, or e-commerce opportunities.

1.3. Social Inclusion Services: Initiatives very often provide innovative solutions for social services, matching agri-food revenues with financial support, such as microfinance, crowd-funding, and community savings schemes, that promote social cooperation and economic participation among marginalized groups in rural areas.

1.4. Social Innovation Hubs: These services provide spaces to several initiatives for integration among activities and support for social entrepreneurs, allowing them to test and scale innovative business models that address rural development challenges. These hubs offer mentorship, networking, sharing activities, and logistical support.

2. Innovative processes

2.1. Participatory Approach, Co-creation, and Collaboration: some projects show successful engagement with local communities' stakeholders, including local governments, social enterprises, NGOs, rural citizens, and businesses in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes. The initiatives demonstrate that the bottom-up approach, when tailored to local needs, helps to leverage resources, skills, and knowledge, facilitating more holistic solutions to rural challenges.

2.2. Capacity Building and Governance: the GPs in some cases include the application of Governance models connecting local participatory approaches to administrative and legal procedures both at regional and transnational level, with capacity-building components as practical learning on doing process. These initiatives frequently employ innovative governance models, such as Local Action Groups, social enterprises, or local development boards, which allow for more democratic and inclusive decision-making and implementation.

3. Innovative Outputs

3.1. Creation of Social Enterprises: The selected initiatives often show the creation of innovative social enterprises that directly address local issues, such as lack of healthcare, or poor infrastructure. They provide examples of



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long-lasting services that improve rural life while reinvesting profits into community development.

3.2. Job Creation and Local Economic Diversification: Outputs include the creation of new jobs because of a diversification and integration of local economies in a holistic dimension beyond traditional agriculture. Some cases develop new activities in sectors, such as tourism, local manufacturing, social-health services, or renewable energy projects.

4. Transferability and Sustainability of Outputs and Results

4.1. Economic and social Empowerment: The initiatives often experience improved access to essential services, like healthcare, education, and transportation, thanks to innovative delivery models (e.g., mobile clinics, telemedicine, agro-health schools). In many cases, the initiatives lead to enhanced social services and a sense of ownership within communities that determine increased income, job creation and the development of new local markets for goods and services: all factors ensuring their transferability and sustainability.

4.2. Environmental Sustainability: Many social economy projects lead to positive environmental results, such as improved land management, sustainable farming practices, increased biodiversity, and reduced carbon footprints.

4.3. Cultural Revitalization and resilience building: Some projects contribute to the preservation and promotion of local culture, heritage, and traditional practices, leading to stronger cultural identities and tourism opportunities that further support rural economies. The initiatives offer examples of how rural areas may become more adaptable to climate change through diversified economic activities and sustainable resource management.

4.4. New governance models: several initiatives have created regional and/or wider inter institutional cooperation that prove their effectiveness in their medium-term sustainability.



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Detailed comparative analysis

1. Innovative services

1.1. Education, training, and information services

A GPs central theme is empowering rural communities, young people, and local stakeholders through education and skill-building programs for ensuring that people are equipped with the knowledge and tools to thrive in evolving markets: training youth, women, and local communities in crucial skills such as entrepreneurship, digital tools, sustainable agriculture, and business management helps individuals become self-sufficient, boosts employability, and fosters entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas (e.g., **YERAME**, **Innov Agro Wo Med**, **Rural Youth Future**). There is a trend to promote eco-entrepreneurship through environmental education and the protection of endangered species, and research and cultural activities support rural development and biodiversity conservation (**POWER4BIO**) to drive the transition to the bioeconomy by developing sustainable bioeconomy strategies and business models. We find services creating blended e-learning courses that equip graduates with the skills necessary for sustainable rural development (**RUR'UP**) and in agroecology and sustainable farming practices of La Junquera a large-scale regenerative agriculture project aimed at revitalizing rural communities by training youth in agroecology and regenerative farming practices that has already restored significant land area, planted thousands of trees, and trained over 1,000 individuals in sustainable farming practices. This initiative is crucial for both environmental sustainability and the revitalization of rural areas through the development of new agricultural livelihoods.

Open Farms emphasizes experiential learning, peer-to-peer collaboration and hands-on experiences in agriculture, while **Algaba de Ronda** focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage. Educational programs, such as those in **Casa Mesola**, **Terra Gaia**, and **SIP**, are also transferring knowledge and skills to vulnerable groups, both in terms of agricultural expertise and social integration.

Several projects emphasize Train-the-Trainer Models: like **DIGI-SEII** and **ENACT**, empowering local trainers and organizations to continue the educational process long after the project ends. Reports, studies, interregional meetings, capacity-building

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initiatives, and tools for accessing public procurement and funding are also carried out to strengthen social economy actors to implement the green and digital transitions in their regions (**SECON**), as well as business idea competitions, policy tools, and a platform for sharing best practices (**Rural Youth Future**), to empowered young people who are better equipped to create their own businesses. It encourages the next generation to participate in the evolving agricultural landscape, benefiting both rural communities and agricultural sustainability.

1.2. Digital and ICT Services

There is a focus on using technology to enhance rural enterprises and educational opportunities, making them more accessible and efficient. Digital platforms, e-learning, AI-powered tools, and training initiatives are used to build digital skills, foster innovation, and facilitate access to new markets. The incorporation of digital tools allows these projects to scale and reach broader audiences:

- **RUR'UP, FoodSHIFT2030, MIP** develop a digital teaching platform and e-learning modules, making educational resources more accessible to rural areas and promote digitalization in the agrifood sector, encouraging youth entrepreneurship and technology transfer.
- Projects like **DIGI-SEII, ENACT, Terra Gaia** and **eLab HauSE.r ur, MD. net** leverage digital tools to enhance social enterprises' operational capacity, improve their reach, and scale their impact embracing digital platforms, including e-commerce to support direct sales of agricultural products.
- Similarly, some initiatives promote digitalization and technological innovation to enhance traditional crafts and agricultural products. **NIVA** focuses on digital solutions to monitor agricultural yields, reduce administrative burdens, and streamline agricultural policies under the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It creates harmonized datasets and trusted methodologies to improve monitoring and reporting systems.

1.3. Social Inclusion Services

Many of these projects focus on social inclusion and integration of vulnerable groups (e.g., individuals with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, migrants, people with autism,

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and marginalized communities). The integration of educational and social activities (e.g., workshops, on-the-job training) provides participants with both life skills and job opportunities. These are initiatives that use agriculture not just as an economic activity, but as a vehicle for social change, environmental education, and cultural heritage preservation.

Innov Agro Wo Med, for instance, targets the empowerment of women in the agri-food sector, while **Rural Youth Future** focuses on youth unemployment in rural areas. These projects highlight the importance of inclusivity in social enterprise innovation.

Inclusion services also cover therapeutic agriculture, social farming and rehabilitation activities. **SIP Social Integration Partnership**, **AGRICOAUT**, **Madonie Agro-Salute**, and **Casa Mesola** initiatives, for example, leverage the therapeutic potential of agriculture, offering personalized support through agricultural activities, pet therapy, and social interactions within farm settings.

Projects like **GOEL**, **Terra Gaia**, and **MD.net** show a strong connection to organic farming, eco-tourism, biodiversity preservation, and local food production, while **SPACE-NEST**, mapping of underutilized spaces, collaborative missions, and the creation of territorial action plans align with EU sustainability frameworks of the New European Bauhaus activities that contribute to local development, along with increased cross-border collaboration.

Welcome Paths, Social tourism, environmental education, and food education in the Tammaro Titero area is an excellent example of how social tourism can drive economic growth and social inclusion, leveraging environmental and food education to boost regional development. The initiative has increased regional tourism by 20%, fostering social inclusion through employment opportunities for migrants and women while also promoting local farming products.

1.4. Social Innovation Hubs

Many of these initiatives operate as cooperative hubs where individuals can engage in practical learning, while also offering support services to enterprises for modernization of activities and methodologies. They strengthen national and regional digitization initiatives and facilitate the development of a robust innovation ecosystem

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for the agri-food sector, especially in Spain and Portugal, to integrate digital solutions across agricultural practices.

1.5. Innovative Ecosystem Networks

ENACT and **DIGI-SEII** emphasize the development of business models that transcend geographical borders, bringing together a variety of stakeholders (e.g., social economy actors, agri-food sector entrepreneurs) to collaborate and create novel solutions, fostering the digital and green transitions. Projects such as **Carbon Farming MED**, **SECON**, and **Innov Agro Wo Med** promote new revenue streams, such as carbon credits (e.g., **Carbon Farming MED**) or social procurement strategies (e.g., **SECON**), to ensure financial sustainability for the social enterprises involved.

Many projects also explore how social enterprises can simultaneously achieve economic growth and social impact, particularly in rural regions. For example, **YERAME** promotes youth entrepreneurship to address unemployment, while **Rural Youth Future** works on providing rural youth with the tools to stay and thrive in their local areas to reduce depopulation: from social enterprises that support local production to new market-driven models that connect consumers directly with producers: interesting initiatives are **Landare**, that operates as a cooperative supermarket that offers healthy food at fair prices, prioritizing direct relationships with producers, Western Macedonia's Agrifood Partnership that creates synergies between food, tourism, and agriculture, **Ovinnova** that develops a new business model for sustainable livestock management that enhances both productivity and environmental preservation, **Smart Agri Hubs**, that creates a European network of **Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)** to foster digital transformation in agriculture.

Some Initiatives encourage the circular economy and low-carbon economy, like **Rein waste**, by transforming agri-food system waste (e.g., packaging, plastics, agricultural by-products) into valuable resources using biotechnology and helps shift towards a more sustainable and circular food system by recycling agri-food waste into usable materials and **Food SHIFT 2030** that tackles the urgent need to transition to a sustainable, low-carbon food system, focusing on multi-actor cooperation to scale up food system innovation, plant-based diets, citizen engagement, job creation.

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2. Innovative processes

2.1. Participatory Approach, Co-creation, and Collaboration

Several projects are designed to involve local communities in co-creation processes. A core principle is community empowerment through cooperation between stakeholders. Local stakeholders, including public authorities, social economy entities, and community organizations, are engaged in the design and implementation of solutions; this approach ensures that initiatives are tailored to local needs, combine and integrate different sectors and have long-term viability. They often involve multi-stakeholder partnerships between public authorities, local businesses, universities, and third-sector organizations. This collective approach amplifies the impact of each project.

FoodSHIFT2030 engages citizens in shaping food systems, promoting empowerment and job creation in the food sector; **APWM** and **Del Ducato LAG** work to promote local agrifood products and create synergies with tourism to support regional development; **SPACE-NEST** and **PARI** projects particularly stress the importance of fostering cross-sectoral cooperation - combining agricultural production with social services, education, and healthcare. The SIP project is an example of this by combining agriculture, therapy, and educational initiatives to create an integrated model that addresses both social and economic challenges.

This can be seen in Projects like **GOEL**, **YERAME** and **Casa Mesola** bring together local farmers, social cooperatives, public institutions, and universities to create integrated models focused on enhancing (youth) rural entrepreneurship across the Mediterranean.

Many projects focus on creating inclusive, socially responsible enterprises that prioritize the welfare of local communities, addressing both economic and social challenges: **RUR'UP** fosters partnerships between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), intergovernmental organizations, and rural development stakeholders; **TOURNET** and **MIP** promote collaboration between tourism, agriculture, and local governments to foster sustainable tourism and agrifood development; **Open Farms** creates a platform for young people to collaborate and innovate on agricultural challenges, building community and fostering intergenerational knowledge exchange;



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Food routes in Emilia-Romagna strengthen local food systems and increase trust among local operators, fostering community cohesion and pride.

2.2. Participatory Approach, Co-creation, and Collaboration

The GPs often promote practical processes connecting local processes to administrative and legal procedures. These processes frequently employ new governance models, such as Local Action Groups, social enterprises, or local development boards, which allow for more democratic and inclusive decision-making and resource distribution:

- **Landare** provides a model of participatory governance, promoting fair trade and giving consumers more agency in the food system.
- **SPACE-NEST** involves cooperation across different regions and countries, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange, the sharing of best practices, and scaling solutions across borders.
- **MD.net** initiative exemplifies this by fostering local and transnational cooperation across 13 Euro-Mediterranean regions to boost rural economies rooted in Mediterranean culture. The project facilitates cooperation between Mediterranean regions, innovation, and the integration of cultural identity, fostering niche tourism and supporting local crafts.
- Local Action Group **Sulcis Iglesiente Capoterra e Campidano di Cagliari** that fosters collaboration at local, regional, and transnational levels to promote sustainable tourism, especially through Enogastronomic and cultural itineraries; **Regions 4Food** that fosters innovation in the agri-food value chain by interregional cooperation and exchange of good practices among stakeholders, and designs action plans to address challenges in the food industry using ICTs; **RAIA** a cross-border cooperation project that addresses shared challenges between Spain and Portugal, focusing on agri-food innovation and rural development. It aims to create a Euro District that promotes "Healthy Living in Harmony with Nature" by developing joint strategies for innovation, socio-economic development, and environmental sustainability.
- **eLabHauSE.rur** initiative provides a different point of view, by promoting co-design and co-creation of sustainable solutions using New European



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Bauhaus principles; the Collaborative platforms, co-design laboratories, local action plans, and a knowledge repository creates a stronger international connection between public authorities, social economy entities, and rural communities, resulting in more resilient and sustainable rural economies.

- Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) Network Relevance creates synergies among public and private organizations, innovation support organizations, and SMEs to foster youth entrepreneurship and technology transfer in the agrifood sector across Mediterranean countries; it strengthens connections with regional policy-makers.
- **Agrifood Partnership of Western Macedonia (APWM)**, fostering collaboration between research, public institutions and local producers is designed to support and promote the agrifood sector in Western Macedonia, creating synergies among stakeholders in agrifood, tourism, and catering sectors. By improving the region's agrifood profile, it enhances both local economies and regional development policies.
- **Food Routes by Del Ducato Local Action Group** promotes a local governance system aiming to enhance regional identity and create local development opportunities. The LAG organization strengthens the management of food routes, increases the number of participating entities, and boosts local trust. It has also contributed to the local tourism economy, with a measurable 20% increase in attendance, while fostering closer collaboration between operators.

3. Innovative Outputs

3.1. Creation of Social Enterprises

The integration of agriculture with social care addresses both the economic sustainability of rural areas and the social inclusion of marginalized groups. It creates a model for other communities to follow. Several GPs show the creation of new social enterprises that directly address local issues. These enterprises combine organic farming with a social cooperative, engaging people in vulnerable situations to enhance their life skills and provide employment opportunities. The farm often serves as a training ground for new farmers, such as **YERAME** courses for young people aged 18-30, and the framework to assess entrepreneurship competencies; or **SIP**



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Social Integration Partnership between agricultural therapy and educational farms for children with mental health or developmental challenges; or "All in the Same Field", integration of vulnerable groups (e.g., people with disabilities) in agricultural work, alongside educational and training activities, or again Terra Gaia offering vocational training, social assistance, and promoting agricultural innovation and e-commerce for disadvantaged individuals. Terra Gaia's initiatives empower disadvantaged individuals through job training and hands-on experience in agriculture. It also promotes local products through e-commerce, expanding market access and showcases how social enterprises can simultaneously address employment, training, and community integration, while fostering local agricultural innovation.

3.2. Job Creation and Economic Diversification:

Economic innovation in these projects is often aimed at creating new job opportunities for marginalized groups as migrants through sustainable entrepreneurship. For instance,

- **GOEL's** network of ethical enterprises has created job opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, health, tourism, and handicrafts, while ensuring fair wages and ethical working conditions.
- **Carbon Farming MED** aims to transform Mediterranean agriculture into regenerative agriculture and agroforestry practices through knowledge dissemination and a cross-border carbon credit trading platform.
- **TOURNET** aims to stimulate innovation in sustainable tourism, focusing on cross-sector networks for small tourism entrepreneurs. By grouping entrepreneurs in sustainable destinations, it provides them with an umbrella environment for cooperation, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, increasing their market competitiveness, and fostering innovation in local tourism sectors.
- **Ovinnova** Project focuses on the preservation of biodiversity through transhumance grazing practices, offering a business model that incentivizes young people to engage in rural livelihoods and supports sustainable livestock farming. The project helps revitalize traditional practices and



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creates employment opportunities for young shepherds, while contributing to biodiversity conservation. It supports rural youth retention by offering a competitive, sustainable business model.

4. Transferability and Sustainability of results

The GPs' initiatives have not only the objective of addressing local challenges but also generating scalable and lasting impacts. They showcase a wide range of innovative approaches, whose results in some cases respond to regulatory requirements or legal frameworks or overall policies or strategies that maintain the found solutions replicable and durable in the long-term: By focusing on skill-building and promoting EU opportunities, many initiatives offer a route for continuous community engagement and long-term economic resilience. However, success will be contingent on continued engagement with local stakeholders, access to funding mechanisms, and governmental support for the social economy. Many projects focus on creating solutions that are not only impactful in the short term but also scalable and transferable across different regions. They aim to build systems and frameworks that can be adapted and replicated, ensuring that the benefits extend beyond the duration of the project. Several projects are designed to scale their impact, either through replication in different regions or by using digital platforms to share knowledge and resources.

4.1. Economic and social Empowerment

- The **YERAME** project, for instance, has strong transferability potential, especially because it focuses on youth rural entrepreneurship, a critical issue across the Mediterranean region. The training materials developed (including “Entrepreneurship Competences”) are accessible and can be adapted to other youth organizations. The cross-border collaboration and focus on transferable skills (entrepreneurship, professional development, etc.) across multiple Mediterranean countries also ensure that its model can be replicated in other rural regions with similar challenges. The sustainability of this initiative hinges on its long-term impact on rural youth employment and entrepreneurship, particularly in reducing dependency on seasonal tourism.

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- **Atlantic Food Export Innovation** aims to improve the international competitiveness of SMEs in the food sector by fostering transnational business cooperation. It helps businesses overcome barriers to internationalization, such as language and market differences, and builds long-term partnerships. Expected long-term outcomes include increased exports, enhanced international market opportunities, and stronger partnerships among food sector SMEs across France, Spain, Portugal, and the UK.
- Similarly, **EXPORT FOOD SUDOE** focuses on helping SMEs in the food sector overcome barriers to internationalization through the creation of cooperation consortia. It offers training, strategic support, and international networking opportunities and supports 100 companies, facilitates 80 internationalization plans, organizes 5 transnational consortia, and promotes these partnerships at major international food fairs.
- **GOEL**, combating mafia influence through a network of ethical enterprises, provides services, builds trust in communities, and provides ethical alternatives to the mafia-run economy. The organization is a powerful example of how social enterprises can break cycles of corruption and poverty, building resilient and ethical economies in marginalized areas. GOEL's multi-sectoral approach to challenging mafia control, fostering ethical entrepreneurship, and promoting community-led development is highly transferable. Its ability to integrate sectors like organic farming, tourism, and social welfare could be adapted in other regions facing organized crime or economic underdevelopment. GOEL's long track record and diverse portfolio across agriculture, hospitality, and social welfare demonstrate strong sustainability. The cooperative model and emphasis on ethical enterprise are key to long-term viability. However, scaling the model might require consistent political and community support.
- **Casa Mesola, AGRICOAUT, SIP Social Integration Partnership**, "All in the Same Field" Initiative multipurpose centres for training and rehabilitation keep aligning with broader goals of fostering inclusive economic development and social inclusion, enduring social support for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other vulnerable groups through farm-based

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therapeutic activities, and illustrates how social farming can be adapted to meet the needs of specific vulnerable groups, such as those with autism, providing tailored services that enhance social inclusion. The integration of social integration through agriculture in therapeutic settings, particularly for people with disabilities, has high transferability. This model could be implemented in other rural areas with agricultural landscapes and a need for social reintegration services, although it would require tailoring to local legal and social contexts. The dual approach of promoting social welfare through agriculture while enhancing rural economic potential creates a sustainable model.

- **RUR'UP**, still supporting the professional competencies of educators and fostering collaborations with regional employers, enhances curricula by embedding competencies aligned with local labor market needs, directly addressing skill gaps and improving employability in rural regions. It facilitates the creation of a network of HEIs and regional stakeholders, contributing to the international pool of Open Educational Resources (OER). The project's educational transdisciplinary approach, which develops a modular blended learning course, can be adapted to rural regions in the EU and potentially beyond. Its focus on High Nature Value (HNV) areas means it is particularly suited for regions with agricultural and environmental concerns. The development of digital platforms and case studies can be shared and tailored to other peripheral regions globally that have similar educational and economic gaps. The project promotes long-term sustainability by equipping higher education institutions (HEIs) with tools to address the specific needs of rural regions, creating a network of local and cross-regional collaboration. By focusing on local needs and integrating innovative pedagogies, it supports the sustainable development of peripheral rural areas by improving skills for sustainable agricultural and community development.
- **SECON's** model of interregional learning can be easily transferred to other EU regions or even outside of Europe where social economies are underdeveloped or underutilized. The project's integration of sustainability into policy frameworks increases the likelihood that it will have lasting effects on the social economy.



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- **ENACT** Project and Rural Youth Future Initiatives, with their emphasis on digital skills and toolkits for policy teams and social entrepreneurship make their results highly transferable to other regions facing youth unemployment and looking to integrate digital solutions in their agri-food systems. The sustainability of these initiatives is strong due to their focus on empowering youth through skill-building in areas like business and digital literacy. The collaboration with regional and national administrations ensures that there will be policy support for rural youth in the long term, particularly if digital and social entrepreneurship is embedded into rural development strategies.
- **DIGI-SEII** focus on equipping social enterprises with digital tools and training is highly transferable, especially in regions that are looking to increase the digital capacity of social enterprises. The hybrid training approach can be replicated across various sectors, including those outside the agri-food industry, and the "train-the-trainer" model, which ensures that support for social enterprises, continues after the project ends. By integrating digital tools into the scaling strategies of social enterprises, the initiative contributes to their resilience and growth.
- **eLabHauSE.rur** approach is very transferable to rural communities throughout Europe, as it focuses on social transformation and resilience using the New European Bauhaus approach. The platform's use of co-design and participatory methodologies makes it adaptable to different local contexts. Sustainability will be ensured through its emphasis on local action plans, collaboration, and capacity-building for public-private partnerships. The Wiki platform's capacity to foster continued collaboration beyond the project's duration ensures long-term impact, though local communities' ability to maintain the platform will be key. The inclusion of training, social welfare, and community engagement creates a multifaceted sustainability strategy. By involving various stakeholders and generating income through organic farming and social activities, it has strong prospects for economic and social sustainability. The challenge will be securing long-term funding and support from local governments.
- **Terra Gaia's** model of integrating vocational training with agricultural activities and social welfare is transferable to regions facing unemployment

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or social exclusion. It is particularly well-suited for areas with a strong agricultural tradition and a need for social services. The focus on local community involvement, economic diversification (e.g., online sales), and vocational training ensures financial and social sustainability. However, long-term success will depend on maintaining stakeholder engagement and adapting to market demands, especially in the e-commerce sector.

- **Madonie Agro-Salute** integration of social agriculture with health and tourism activities offers strong transferability to other depopulated rural regions that are seeking to revitalize their economies. The model could be adapted to regions with similar social, environmental, and economic challenges. By integrating diverse sectors like health, agriculture, and tourism, this initiative has high sustainability prospects. The cooperation between different stakeholders (e.g., universities, municipalities, health districts) helps ensure the project's long-term viability, though maintaining these partnerships will be key.
- **Open Farms (OFs)** model of connecting education, agriculture, and youth engagement through challenge-based learning can be replicated in various regions facing agricultural sustainability challenges. Its use of virtual service learning combined with hands-on experience offers a flexible and scalable approach to fostering innovation and collaboration in rural farming communities. By engaging youth in agriculture and sustainability, Open Farms promotes long-term interest and innovation in farming. Its collaborative format ensures that both short-term and long-term outcomes will benefit farmers and local communities, helping them address evolving challenges and opportunities in agriculture.
- **La Junquera Regenerative Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative** practices and focus on training young farmers can be adapted to other regions with similar environmental conditions and challenges, particularly those facing land degradation or rural depopulation. The emphasis on agroecology and soil conservation practices offers valuable lessons for other regions looking to revitalize their agricultural sectors sustainably. The project promotes long-term sustainability by restoring land, planting trees, and training young farmers. Its focus on regenerative agriculture ensures that the

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environmental, economic, and social benefits will continue to grow, enhancing rural development and community resilience.

- Food Routes in Emilia-Romagna model of creating food routes to promote local agricultural specialties and attract tourists can be replicated in other rural areas with distinctive food cultures. The emphasis on local branding, capacity building, and collaboration among operators makes it adaptable to different contexts, particularly in regions with strong agricultural traditions but underdeveloped tourism sectors. The creation of strong local food routes enhances the economic sustainability of rural communities by attracting visitors and promoting local products. The collaboration between public and private stakeholders ensures that the project is well integrated into local economies and can continue to grow, fostering a sustainable tourism industry in rural areas.

4.2. Environmental Sustainability

Many projects focus on environmental sustainability, often through the promotion of green activities like carbon farming, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and eco-friendly entrepreneurship. The initiatives integrate circular economy principles, sustainable land use, and the reduction of carbon footprints, supporting climate goals and fostering eco-friendly business models. Several projects aim to strengthen the resilience of rural communities, enabling them to overcome crises (e.g., economic downturns, depopulation) by fostering new economic models, supporting local businesses, and enhancing community cohesion.

- The Carbon Farming MED Project is highly transferable within Mediterranean countries and regions with similar agricultural climates and challenges. By focusing on carbon farming practices (regenerative agriculture and agroforestry), it can be applied to various regions that seek to transition to more sustainable farming methods. The creation of a carbon credit market could also be adapted in other EU regions or globally where similar environmental concerns are paramount. This project's sustainability is closely tied to its ability to embed carbon farming practices and the carbon credit market within regional agricultural sectors. The long-term success of

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this initiative will depend on its integration with national and EU-level climate policies, technological advancement in carbon capture, and the development of an economic model that supports ongoing engagement from farmers and stakeholders.

- **REUTIVAR Innovation:** The project focuses on optimizing the regeneration of olive groves through a precision fertigation system that reuses nutrients from reclaimed water. This addresses water scarcity, particularly in Andalusia, by using reclaimed water efficiently for irrigation. It aligns with European agricultural, environmental, and water resource policies. Results: The regeneration treatment meets water quality standards at low cost and energy consumption, promotes circular economy principles by reusing nutrients, reduces pollution, and mitigates climate change.
- **Bioterreta Innovation:** This initiative tackles land abandonment and depopulation by applying agroecology, circular economy, and digital management tools. It focuses on collaborative land recovery using advanced satellite control, remote management, and IoT. The project integrates sustainable farming with natural cycles and supports social inclusion. Over 15,630 m² of land has been recovered, with trees rehabilitated and new plantings like local olive varieties. It encourages rural entrepreneurship and contributes to organic food production.
- **ALMENDREHESA** promotes regenerative agriculture to enhance environmental sustainability. It involves diverse agricultural activities (almonds, pistachios, olives) and emphasizes worker welfare, sustainable practices (e.g., livestock integration, dryland irrigation), and collaboration with other companies in the sector. Over 2,500 hectares of crops are managed sustainably, producing high-quality products for export. The project emphasizes worker well-being, fair wages, and environmental care.
- **Climate Farm Demo:** This pan-European project accelerates the adoption of Climate Smart Farming (CSF) through a network of 1,500 Pilot Demo Farmers across 28 countries. It involves demonstration events, peer-to-peer learning, and co-creation of CSF solutions to help farmers adapt to climate change. The project aims to organize 4,500 demo events, create 10 Living Labs for innovation, and provide rewards for adopting CSF practices. It also

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influences EU agricultural policy and encourages widespread adoption of climate-smart practices.

- FoodLoops addresses food waste and circular economy challenges by improving biowaste separation, reducing food waste, and turning it into organic compost. It also integrates high-tech solutions, such as remote sensing and AI-driven systems, for efficient resource management in greenhouse farming, optimizing water, energy, and pesticide usage. The project aims to increase crop yields, enhance water and energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve overall sustainability in agriculture through precision farming and circular economy practices. It brings together various stakeholders (schools, farmers, caterers, municipalities) to promote a more sustainable agricultural ecosystem.
- PARI Project focus on developing clusters of social and ecological innovation in rural territories is highly transferable. Its emphasis on building local capacity through participatory pilots and creating strategies for social and environmental innovation can be applied to a wide range of rural regions across Europe and beyond. Sustainability is central to PARI's approach, which promotes local capacity-building and cooperation among stakeholders. The long-term success of the clusters will depend on the continued engagement of public and private sector actors in rural communities, as well as their ability to implement and scale the strategies developed.
- Welcome Paths combination of environmental, food, and social education, alongside inclusive tourism and social agriculture, makes this initiative highly transferable to other rural areas with natural and cultural heritage. The involvement of local farms and businesses in tourism could easily be replicated in similar regions. With its emphasis on sustainable tourism and local economic development, the model offers long-term sustainability. The increase in regional attendance suggests economic viability, but maintaining engagement with the local community and diversifying income sources will be critical.
- FoodSHIFT2030 's aim to transition European food systems to low-carbon, circular models with citizen empowerment is highly transferable to other regions, especially cities looking to shift their food systems towards

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sustainability. The multi-actor approach involving municipalities, SMEs, NGOs, and research institutes offers a flexible model for adaptation across diverse urban and rural settings, particularly in countries aiming to reduce their environmental footprint. FoodSHIFT2030 integrates environmental, economic, and societal sustainability, aiming to embed these in food systems at both local and regional levels. The empowerment of citizens to make informed food choices and the support for job creation in sustainable food sectors ensure that the project's outcomes will persist well beyond the program's completion.

- Agrifood Partnership of Western Macedonia (APWM) focus on enhancing the competitiveness of agrifood products and creating synergies across local food, tourism, and catering sectors is transferable to other regions with a rich agrifood heritage but underdeveloped market linkages. Its emphasis on collaboration among local stakeholders—such as agricultural cooperatives, chambers of commerce, and universities—enhances its replicability in other rural and peri-urban regions. APWM supports the long-term sustainability of local agrifood production by promoting product quality, certification, and market expansion. The creation of synergies between the agrifood, tourism, and catering sectors strengthens regional economies and fosters long-term viability.
- Ovinnova Project's model of improving the competitiveness of transhumance grazing practices while preserving biodiversity is highly relevant for regions with similar traditional grazing practices. The project's approach could be applied to other areas in Europe and beyond, especially those aiming to support sustainable livestock farming practices and rejuvenate rural areas through innovative business models. The project focuses on enhancing the sustainability of transhumance by creating new employment opportunities, particularly for youth. Its emphasis on biodiversity preservation and sustainable livestock management ensures that the project's outcomes will have long-lasting environmental and economic impact.



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4.3. Cultural Revitalization and resilience building

Several projects are rooted in local culture and tradition, preserving agricultural practices, local products, and regional heritage while fostering innovation; they use a holistic approach that integrates ecological restoration, community engagement, and market-driven solutions for indigenous organic products. Many rural regions in Europe face similar challenges with underutilized spaces and these practices are highly transferable: initiatives such as

- Casa Mesola, where local agricultural practices related to asparagus cultivation are promoted alongside social inclusion activities.
- MD.net and Welcome Paths emphasize the integration of cultural tourism with sustainable practices, ensuring that cultural identity and local traditions are celebrated and maintained through tourism initiatives that benefit rural communities economically.
- Ovinnova promotes transhumance grazing, which preserves biodiversity while supporting rural livelihoods.
- Del Ducato LAG strengthens local food routes, revitalizing regional identity through tourism and local gastronomy.
- FoodSHIFT2030 encourages local food systems, focusing on plant-based diets that align with regional agricultural capacities.
- Foundation Regeneration Academy (La Junquera) through regenerative agriculture involves crop diversification, water and erosion management, and ecological restoration of 2,500 hectares of land, 30,000 trees, and soil organic matter increased.
- Algaba de Ronda has received awards for heritage conservation, and its educational programs and research activities foster sustainable entrepreneurship and community engagement.
- Alvelal is part of international restoration networks and focuses on long-term regenerative agricultural practices through collaboration with local communities and stakeholders who develop biological corridors to conserve biodiversity. It has initiated a large-scale ecosystem restoration plan, connecting natural spaces and promoting sustainable land management.

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- SPACE-NEST Project focused on abandoned rural spaces works on integration of its strategy in the New European Bauhaus and the European Green Deal frameworks.

4.4. New governance models

Some initiatives have created regional and/or wider inter institutional cooperation in compliance with legal frameworks and administrative procedures that provide Policy Influence, Advocacy and long-term sustainability to the actions due to the possibility of funding from the EU and continuous renewal for new programming periods. These initiatives offer models of multi-stakeholder approach and the integration of different strategies for tourism development, innovation, and local cultural identity. The emphasis on creating synergies across sectors (agrifood, technology, and youth engagement) enhances its adaptability to various contexts. The integration among various stakeholders (e.g., local governments, universities, private businesses) could be adapted to other regions and encourage cross-sector collaboration.

- Local Action Group Sulcis Iglesiente Capoterra e Campidano di Cagliari (LAG Sulcis). The wine sector offers significant potential for replication in other rural, historically industrialized regions. The emphasis on short supply chains, social agriculture, and internationalization suggests adaptability to other territories with similar agricultural or cultural profiles. The integration of wine tourism and agricultural innovation could drive long-term economic resilience in the region.
- MD.net Project The focus on transnational cooperation, innovation, and digitalization in rural areas is highly transferable to regions seeking to integrate modern technologies with traditional agricultural and craft industries. Its long-term success will depend on the continuity of international partnerships, innovation investments, and the scalability of digital solutions for small producers.
- TOURNET - Cross-sectoral Networks for Sustainable Tourism- The CSTN approach could be applied to other rural or ecotourism destinations seeking to enhance sustainability in tourism by helping small entrepreneurs collaborate and share resources.



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- Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) Network - The MIP's focus on youth entrepreneurship and agrifood sector innovation across the Mediterranean region makes it highly transferable to other developing regions. Its model could be applied to other rural areas globally that seek to encourage entrepreneurship while fostering technological innovation.
- FoodSHIFT2030 promotes a shift to plant-based diets and circular food systems to reduce carbon footprints and ensure food system sustainability.
- Ovinnova works on preserving biodiversity through sustainable transhumance grazing.
- La Junquera focuses on regenerative agriculture, emphasizing soil conservation and organic farming.
- Landare is committed to organic food production, offering access to healthy food while supporting local producers.

Projects like Carbon Farming MED and SECON work towards influencing public policies that support the growth of social enterprises and sustainable practices. For instance, Carbon Farming MED is working on a carbon farming framework and the creation of a carbon credit market, while SECON aims to improve policies around the social economy and raise awareness of its importance.

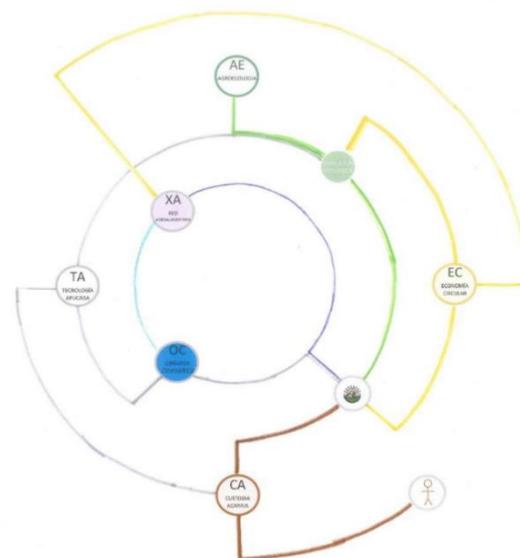
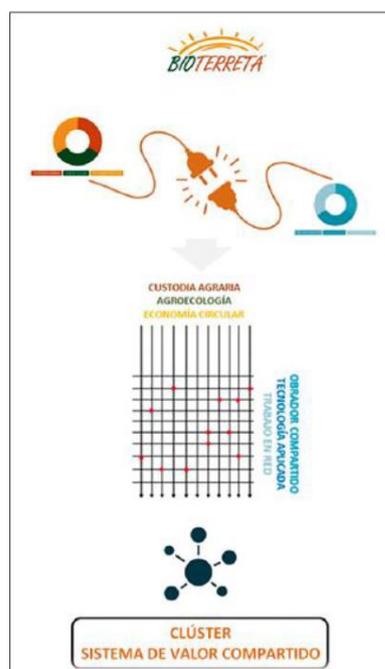
Project identified as the best example of good practice: BIOTERRETA

Bioterreta Project in Valencia focuses on land restoration and the application of agro-ecological practices, integrating the circular economy and digital management tools.

Some of the features that this project aims to achieve:

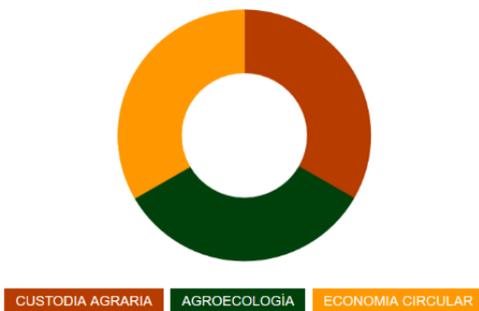
Cultural Revitalization and Resilience Building

- Bioterreta contributes to cultural revitalization by encouraging community participation in the recovery of their land and heritage. The project also helps to build resilience in rural areas by addressing issues like agricultural abandonment and depopulation, thereby strengthening local communities' ability to thrive despite challenges.
- Bioterreta, as a shared value system, is based on six key pillars: agricultural stewardship, agroecology, circular economy, applied technology, collaborative work, and a network of shared workshops.



Environmental Sustainability

- Implementation of sustainable practices. Bioterreta addresses the issue of land abandonment and depopulation by applying and combining methods of agroecology, circular economy, and land stewardship. By integrating these three disciplines, it promotes agro-environmental sustainability following the cyclical model of nature, utilizing resources through ecological and regenerative farming techniques.



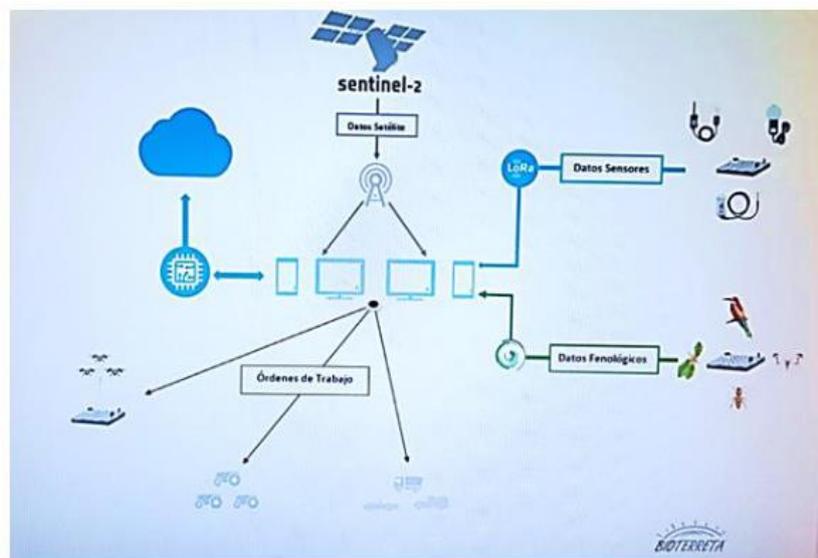
Social Inclusion

- Recovering land collaboratively, supporting rural entrepreneurship, and connecting businesses with the environment. In this way, it seeks to generate economic opportunities for marginalized communities, create jobs in rural areas, and provide services to landowners and farmers who can no longer manage the land, thus improving economic opportunities for people who have historically faced challenges due to agricultural abandonment.



Use of Technology and Digital Tools

- Bioterreta aims to enhance operational capacity, essential for empowerment and sustainability, using technology adapted to the type of small-scale structures and their ecosystems. This includes advanced satellite monitoring with remote management, radio-controlled robots, IoT (Internet of Things) tools, offering a more efficient and sustainable agricultural approach. Additionally, it has created a technological system that feeds back into the land stewardship process, making it more effective and advanced.



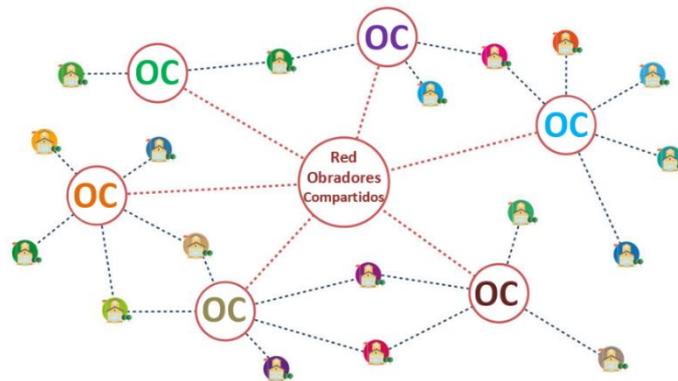
Collaboration and Training

- It adopts an educational or training approach and knowledge exchange, which are essential for empowerment and long-term sustainability of such initiatives. This project highlights the importance of collaboration and networking for the restoration of abandoned lands and territorial cohesion, and as such. It trains local communities, encourages their participation, and fosters empowerment.

Networking

- Networking involves creating synergies within a working group for learning and development. We believe it is necessary to foster collaborative networking skills between initiatives and organizations in our sector.

- Collaborative work within an organization involves achieving common goals through knowledge transfer. This working model ensures that collective knowledge and takes advantage of the benefits offered by technology. An example of a collaborative network structure would be the creation of an interconnected network of shared workshops strategically located in different municipalities across the territory



Regenerative Agriculture Practices

- The use of regenerative agriculture practices is part of Bioterreta's approach. This not only helps restore the land but also supports the development of new employment opportunities, as improving the quality of the agricultural ecosystem and its products increases the land's value. It encourages the participation of the local community and fosters teamwork among stakeholders. The Bioterreta model has already expanded to several regions, and its use of technology and innovative processes ensures that the results can be replicated in other areas and contexts, making it transferable.



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Cultural Revitalization and Building Resilience

- Bioterreta contributes to cultural revitalization by encouraging community participation in the recovery of their lands and heritage. The project also helps generate resilience in rural areas by addressing issues such as agricultural abandonment and depopulation, thereby strengthening the ability of local communities to thrive despite challenges.

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Results

Common Thread of Integrated, Inclusive, and Sustainable Development

These initiatives demonstrate a comprehensive, integrated approach to innovation in rural development. The common threads include multi-stakeholder collaboration, a focus on sustainability (both environmental and economic), the empowerment of marginalized communities, and the use of technology and education to scale impact. Together, they form a robust network of socially innovative enterprises driving systemic change in rural and peripheral areas across Europe through their practical demonstration of effectiveness in capacity building, cross-sector collaboration, environmental sustainability, digital transformation, social inclusion, business model innovation, and policy advocacy.

All the initiatives have empowered individuals and communities and leverage digital tools and cross-border cooperation to create long-lasting, scalable solutions. Their success in being replicated is underpinned on local adaptations to specific regional needs, on stakeholder involvement, and the capacity of securing long-term financial and political support.

To stress Innovation factors common aspects of these social enterprises are:

- **Training & Capacity-Building:** Providing learning opportunities for personal and professional growth, for young people.
- **Social Inclusion & Empowerment:** Focusing on marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- **Sustainability & Agri-Entrepreneurship:** Utilizing agriculture and local resources to create economic, social and environmental values.
- **Collaborative Networks:** Encouraging cooperation among a variety of stakeholders.
- **Cultural & Heritage Preservation:** Integrating cultural aspects with economic and social activities.



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Constraints to starting and scaling-up Social Enterprises

The GPs show that there is a wide range of interplaying factors inhibiting social enterprise development and growth across Europe. They also determine the success of social enterprises analysed when they solve these structural difficulties:

- Poor understanding of the concept of social enterprise among various stakeholder groups, for example policy makers. Success cases of social enterprises are not well known or understood by the public. This gap concerns several initiatives here gathered, that have insufficient and small-scaled attempts at communication, dissemination, and “branding” their outputs and results.
- Absence of common mechanisms for measuring and demonstrating impact. While recent initiatives in Europe (see EU Commission website) have raised awareness on the importance of reporting on impact of some social enterprises to improve in the area, a lot remains to be done in almost all countries of this study.
- Lack of policy frameworks at regional and local levels: despite legislative frameworks at European and National levels, a support to social enterprises through providing visibility, for example, or attracting tax incentives, or allowing to undertake some economic activities is uncommon.
- Lack of business development services that support business planning and start-up. Access to finance, for example, is a significant barrier to sustainability of social enterprises, despite their effectiveness. Several analysed GPs were not able to keep themselves alive for their limited access to bank finance due to national bank rules.
- High reliance on the public sector as source of income that jeopardises the long term- sustainability of the enterprises.
- Lack of entrepreneurial spirit, professional skills, and commercial orientation to translate social undertaking into a successful business model.

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DEVELOPMENT OF CASE STUDIES

Case studies from identified good practices

In conclusion of the Good Practices' report, the GPs highlight the dynamic potential of social enterprises to address multiple challenges in rural and marginalized areas. Among them, this report selects those more relevant for their multifaceted approaches to address some of the most pressing challenges and yield long-term benefits for the re-Design regions they serve.

Moreover, through transnational cooperation and knowledge-sharing provided by the re-design activities, these projects can create synergies that extend beyond local communities, ensuring that the innovative solutions they generate can be replicated and scaled. The Key Insights supporting the case-studies selection are:

- **Social inclusion:** These initiatives focus on integrating disadvantaged groups, such as individuals with disabilities, migrants, or those affected by socio-economic marginalization into productive agricultural and social enterprises.
- **Economic diversification:** These initiatives combine agriculture with tourism, health services, and digital innovation, demonstrating how rural economies can thrive through diversified, socially responsible enterprises.
- **Environmental sustainability:** These initiatives emphasize sustainable agricultural practices, eco-tourism, and environmental education, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of ecological integrity.
- **Collaboration and networks:** These initiatives rely on strong networks of local and transnational stakeholders, including social enterprises, public institutions, and universities, fostering collective action.



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1. Amelioration and Conservation of Rouvas Forest on Idi Mountain

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	Amelioration and Conservation of Rouvas Forest on Idi Mountain
Acronym (if applicable)	
Beneficiary name	Municipality of Rouvas
Country	GREECE
Programme funding	LIFE+ Programme
Period of implementation	1999-2001
Key Insights supporting the case-studies	
<p>Social Inclusion: The project actively engaged the local community, particularly livestock owners, in conservation efforts. A two-week seminar on grassland management was conducted, targeting 38 young livestock raisers. Additionally, a building in Gergeri village was renovated to serve as an information center for visitors, distributing educational materials and raising public awareness about the forest's ecological importance. These initiatives fostered community involvement and promoted sustainable practices among local stakeholders.</p> <p>Economic Diversification: By improving pasturelands and promoting sustainable grazing practices, the project aimed to enhance the livelihoods of local livestock owners. The establishment of a plant nursery near Rouvas provided native flora species for distribution to the local forest service and individuals, supporting local biodiversity and offering potential economic benefits through the cultivation of native plants. Furthermore, the renovation of lodges and development of viewpoints aimed to attract ecotourism, providing alternative income streams for the community.</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability: The project's core focus was the regeneration and protection of the Rouvas oak forest ecosystem. Key actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland Regeneration: Fencing 100 hectares of forest to control grazing and facilitate natural regeneration. • Protection of Endangered Species: Fencing areas to safeguard populations of the endemic orchid <i>Cephalanthera cucullata</i> and the tree <i>Zelkova abelicea</i>. • Pastureland Improvement: Enhancing 15 hectares of adjacent pastureland to compensate livestock farmers for reduced grazing areas within the forest. • Fire Prevention and Monitoring: Renovating lodges for wardens responsible for guarding against fires, monitoring wildlife, and controlling visitor activities. <p>These measures aimed to restore the forest's ecological balance, prevent soil erosion, and conserve biodiversity.</p> <p>Collaboration and Networks: The project was a collaborative effort between the Municipality of Rouvas and the local development company AKOM-M. This partnership facilitated the integration of conservation actions with local development</p>	



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plans. The involvement of local livestock owners and the broader community was crucial for the project's success, ensuring that conservation measures were supported and sustained. Additionally, the project contributed to the objectives of the Natura 2000 network by enhancing the conservation status of the Idi Mountain area.

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2. Building a Common Vision for Mount Pindos, Greece

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	Building a Common Vision for Mount Pindos, Greece
Acronym (if applicable)	RUR'UP
Beneficiary name	University of Thessaly
Country	GREECE
Programme funding	Erasmus+ (Strategic Partnership, Key Action 2)
Period of implementation	2020-2024
Key Insights supporting the case-studies selection are	
<p>Social Inclusion: The Mount Pindos region is experiencing demographic decline, with an aging population and migration affecting rural life. However, the return of younger farmers and engagement of local communities in sustainable agricultural practices are fostering social cohesion. The transhumant population adds to the seasonal vibrancy of the region, while cooperative initiatives and cultural associations play a role in preserving traditions and knowledge sharing.</p>	
<p>Economic Diversification: The economy of the area is primarily based on pastoral farming, small-scale agriculture, and agri-tourism. Efforts to diversify income sources include agrotourism, local product branding, and small-scale food entrepreneurship. Innovative cheese-making and local honey production contribute to sustaining the rural economy, providing alternative revenue streams beyond traditional farming.</p>	
<p>Environmental Sustainability: Mount Pindos is a high-value nature area (HNV), featuring rich biodiversity and protected Natura 2000 sites. Sustainable grazing practices, organic farming, and responsible land management help maintain the ecological balance. Local initiatives focus on preserving native plant species and managing natural resources to prevent soil degradation and overgrazing.</p>	
<p>Collaboration and Networks: Collaboration among farmers, researchers, and local development agencies is crucial for the sustainable development of the area. The University of Thessaly plays a key role in knowledge dissemination, while local and national stakeholders participate in capacity-building initiatives. The involvement of diaspora communities strengthens ties between local and external actors, promoting shared investments and knowledge transfer.</p>	

3. Conservation of Ancient Olive Groves in Voukolies, Crete

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	CENT.OLI.MED – Conservation of Ancient Olive Groves in Voukolies, Crete
Acronym (if applicable)	CENT.OLI.MED
Beneficiary name	Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU)
Country	GREECE
Programme funding	LIFE+ Programme
Period of implementation	2009-2012
Key Insights supporting the case-studies	
<p>Social Inclusion: The CENT.OLI.MED project actively involved local farmers and communities in the conservation of ancient olive orchards (AOOs) in Voukolies, Crete. By engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes and implementing sustainable agricultural practices, the project fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local population. Educational initiatives and workshops were conducted to raise awareness about the ecological and cultural significance of AOOs, promoting social cohesion and preserving traditional knowledge.</p> <p>Economic Diversification: Recognizing the economic potential of ancient olive groves, the project introduced strategies to enhance the market value of products derived from these orchards. This included the propagation of germplasm from ancient olive trees, resulting in the production of over 9,000 seedlings made available to local farmers. Additionally, the establishment of a visitors' center and the development of agritourism activities, such as guided walking paths through the olive groves, provided alternative income streams for the community. These efforts aimed to diversify the local economy beyond traditional agriculture by integrating tourism and heritage conservation.</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability: The project implemented several measures to enhance biodiversity and promote sustainable land management within the ancient olive orchards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Enhancement: Construction and restoration of over 1,000 meters of dry-stone walls using traditional techniques provided habitats for various fauna and helped preserve soil moisture. • Flora Diversification: Planting approximately 3,000 meters of hedges with native species such as lentisk, myrtle, and hawthorn increased plant diversity and offered shelter and food for wildlife. • Soil Quality Improvement: Reconstruction of degraded turf grass over a one-hectare area aimed to establish a community of Mediterranean grassland, enhancing soil quality and supporting the reproduction of local bird species. <p>These actions contributed to the preservation of the ecological integrity of the region,</p>	

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ensuring that agricultural practices remained in harmony with the natural environment.

Collaboration and Networks

The success of CENT.OLI.MED was underpinned by robust partnerships among various stakeholders:

- **Local Authorities and Farmers' Unions:** Collaboration with local municipalities and agricultural cooperatives facilitated the implementation of conservation strategies and ensured alignment with regional development plans.
- **Research Institutions:** Partnerships with universities and research centers provided scientific expertise for biodiversity assessments and the development of sustainable farming guidelines.
- **International Cooperation:** The project engaged with representatives from other Mediterranean countries, fostering the exchange of knowledge and experiences related to the management of ancient olive orchards.

These collaborative efforts culminated in the development of management guidelines and action plans aimed at the sustainable preservation of ancient olive groves, serving as a model for similar initiatives in the Mediterranean region.

The CENT.OLI.MED project in Voukolies, Crete, exemplifies a comprehensive approach to the conservation and valorization of High Nature Value farmland, integrating social inclusion, economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and collaborative networks to achieve its objectives.

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4. TERRA THESSALIA

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	TERRA THESSALIA – A Territorial Cluster of Valorisation of High Nature Value (HNV) Farming
Acronym (if applicable)	TERRA THESSALIA
Beneficiary name	University of Thessaly
Country	GREECE
Programme funding	Erasmus+ (Strategic Partnership, Key Action 2)
Period of implementation	2013-2015 (initial phase under MED Programme LACTIMED);
Key Insights supporting the case-studies selection are	
<p>Social inclusion: TERRA THESSALIA fosters inclusivity by uniting small-scale livestock farmers, artisanal cheese makers, cooperatives, and local stakeholders under a shared territorial cluster. This initiative strengthens the role of pastoral communities, ensuring their active participation in decision-making and economic activities. By promoting the preservation of traditional knowledge and supporting local networks, the project enhances rural livelihoods and fosters social cohesion.</p> <p>Economic Diversification: The project supports small dairy farmers and cheese makers by providing structured marketing strategies, access to advisory services, and a territorial Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). By increasing the value of High Nature Value (HNV) dairy products such as feta and Agrafo cheese, the initiative allows small producers to compete with industrial dairy operations. Additionally, the project facilitates agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales, further diversifying income streams.</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability: TERRA THESSALIA emphasizes sustainable livestock grazing and pasture management to preserve the ecological integrity of the region. The project promotes local breeds suited for extensive pastoral systems, reducing environmental impact. The introduction of biodiversity-friendly farming practices ensures that HNV farms maintain their ecological role while producing high-quality dairy products. Furthermore, efforts are made to integrate HNV-friendly policies into agricultural frameworks.</p> <p>Collaboration and Networks: A strong network of stakeholders, including local development agencies, cooperative banks, universities, and research institutions, supports the project. The participatory nature of the initiative enables knowledge sharing and the creation of a governance structure that empowers farmers. TERRA THESSALIA also collaborates with regional and national authorities to influence policy measures that support HNV farming and product valorization.</p>	



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5. Gayas

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	GAYAS
Acronym (if applicable)	GAYAS
Beneficiary name	Grupo Operativo GAYAS
Country	SPAIN
Programme funding	FEADER 2014-20 FEDER, Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural
Period of implementation	November 2020-April 2023
Key Insights supporting the case-studies	
<p>Environmental sustainability: GAYAS promotes the creation of Rural Transformation Centres in which products from local farms will be prepared for sale fresh or prepared into prepared food and delivered to the consumer's home through an e-commerce platform. Also, GAYAS promotes the implementation of abandoned or underused lands, influencing the potential of the environment rural</p> <p>Collaboration and networks: An innovative project that aims to revitalize the rural areas of the Lugo Mountain and southwestern Asturias; uniting the territory's producers to establish joint marketing strategies and channels. This way, GAYAS brings together small producers in the territory and establish alliances with the projects that are part of this operational group.</p> <p>Social inclusion: Hiring young people and women in the sector.</p>	

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6. Foundation Regeneration Academy

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of the case study	Foundation Regeneration Academy
Acronym (if applicable)	LA JUNQUERA
Beneficiary name	LA JUNQUERA
Country	SPAIN
Programme funding	The budget varies from year to year. As a foundation, they have no profit motive. They receive funding from other foundations, private donors, private and public projects, and activities they do such as training.
Period of implementation	2020-Today
Key Insights supporting the case-studies selection are	
<p>Social inclusion: The main innovation of this project is the creation of hubs: The HUB is a 350m² area that comprises an information centre, educational facilities, an innovation kitchen, and a shop that will offer products from the territory for visitors to take home. More than 1,000 young farmers and professionals have been trained. By doing this, they encourage young farmers to learn about the agricultural sector and how to face the problems that may arise. They also inspire local youth to start their own regenerative rural businesses, and enable agro-food professionals to better understand the intricacies of landscape restoration.</p> <p>Economic diversification: The aim of La Junquera is to turn into a regenerative farm by implementing regenerative practices, reviving the village and local community, generating economic activity, and restoring the degraded natural zones. Current activities or upcoming plans regarding this development include: crop diversification, water and erosion management, ecological restoration. In few months, they are launching their first online shop to bring the delicious and artisan products from La Junquera to people worldwide.</p> <p>Environmental sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROJECTS: La Junquera focuses on achieving sustainable production while restoring farmland and natural areas through regenerative agriculture practices. These practices not only help to reduce erosion, improve fertility, and increase water infiltration but also help to increase biodiversity. The fund received from Patagonia has helped to develop these aims. The project consisted of planting 5000 native shrub and tree species on strategic areas to protect the soil against erosion, connect natural areas, and support the biodiversity of the area. - COURSES: Regeneration Academy aims to train present and future generations in regenerative agriculture. For this, they have designed different programs for different audiences that are interested in research, entrepreneurship, ecosystem restoration, and regenerative agriculture techniques. 	



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- **KIDS:** Educate and inspire rural youth to get involved in climate mitigating actions in the areas of regenerative farming and sustainable agribusiness by focusing on sustainable practices related to agriculture and the rural environment.

Their main programs are the "youth program" aimed at secondary schools and the "summer camp", the first regenerative camp in Spain for children between 10 and 15 years old.

Collaboration and networks: One of their goals is to reconnect young entrepreneurs and academics to the Spanish countryside, where they can learn the tools to become innovators in the fields of regenerative agriculture and ecosystem restoration.



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CONCLUSIONS

At its core, the rEdESIGN project recognizes the pivotal role of the social economy in promoting inclusive and sustainable development. It acknowledges that rural areas often face unique challenges, including economic isolation, limited access to services, environmental pressures, and social inequalities. By fostering social innovation and strengthening cooperation among social businesses, the project seeks to address these challenges and unlock the full potential of rural communities. The document highlights the European Commission's emphasis on the social economy as a critical component of economic growth and social inclusion, aligning with broader EU policies and strategies aimed at fostering a competitive social market economy.

WP2, the focus of this document, is dedicated to Literature Review and Knowledge Gathering. Its primary objective is to compile and analyze existing research, reports, and best practices related to social economy and social innovation in rural communities. This endeavor involves a thorough examination of EU documents, project reports, policy papers, academic literature, private initiatives, and regional programs. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape, identify successful models, and develop actionable recommendations for the rEdESIGN project.

The document outlines five key deliverables for WP2: the Literature Review Report (D2.1), the Key Recommendations Document (D2.2), the Good Practices Database (D2.3), the Analysis and Synthesis Report (D2.4), and the Case Studies/Report (D2.5). Each deliverable plays a crucial role in building a robust knowledge base and informing the project's subsequent activities. The Literature Review Report provides a detailed overview of existing materials, establishing a foundation for the project. The Key Recommendations Document translates the findings into practical guidance for implementing good practices in the social economy. The Good Practices Database compiles successful initiatives, while the Analysis and Synthesis Report analyzes these practices to identify innovative tools, methodologies, and outcomes. Finally, the Case Studies/Report offers in-depth examples of successful initiatives, providing valuable insights and lessons learned.



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The methodology employed in WP2 is rigorous and comprehensive. The project team consulted a wide range of sources, categorized into six main groups: EU projects, EU reference documents, academic literature, private initiatives, regional programs, and academic research. A standardized template was used to ensure consistency and thoroughness in data collection and analysis. This systematic approach allowed the team to gather a diverse range of information and identify key trends, challenges, and opportunities.

The findings of the literature review reveal several key themes and insights. One prominent theme is the importance of community involvement and local ownership in social economy projects. When local stakeholders are actively engaged in decision-making and implementation, projects are more likely to be sustainable and impactful. The document emphasizes the need to empower local communities and ensure that projects cater to their specific needs and interests. Another key finding is the value of cross-sector collaboration. Partnerships between social enterprises, local governments, businesses, and civil society can bring together diverse resources, expertise, and networks, leading to more effective solutions for rural development. The document highlights the importance of fostering such partnerships and creating platforms for dialogue and collaboration.

Capacity building and skills development are also identified as crucial factors for success. Investing in training programs that build local leadership and entrepreneurial skills can empower rural communities and enable them to manage and grow social enterprises. The document emphasizes the need for training in areas such as business management, sustainable agriculture, and digital marketing. Leveraging digital tools and innovation is another key recommendation. Digital technologies can expand the reach and effectiveness of social enterprises, facilitate market access, and foster knowledge sharing. The document encourages the adoption of digital platforms and solutions to overcome geographical barriers and enhance operational efficiency.

Access to funding and financial support is identified as a significant challenge for rural social enterprises. The document calls for tailored funding mechanisms, including grants, microfinancing, and social impact investing, to address the unique needs of these enterprises. It also highlights the importance of promoting policy and regulatory support, such as tax incentives and streamlined regulations, to create a

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favorable environment for growth. The document delves into a detailed comparative analysis of successful social enterprises, focusing on innovative services, processes, and outputs. Innovative services include education and training, digital and ICT services, social inclusion services, and social innovation hubs. Innovative processes encompass participatory approaches, co-creation, collaboration, capacity building, and governance. Innovative outputs include the creation of social enterprises, job creation, and local economic diversification. The analysis also examines the transferability and sustainability of results, emphasizing economic and social empowerment, environmental sustainability, cultural revitalization, and new governance models.

One project, BIOTERRETA, is identified as a prime example of good practice. This project in Valencia focuses on land restoration and the application of agro-ecological practices, integrating the circular economy and digital management tools. It demonstrates how environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic development can be achieved through innovative approaches.

The document also presents several case studies from identified good practices, providing in-depth examples of successful initiatives. These case studies offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing social economy projects in rural areas. They showcase the importance of community engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and innovative solutions.

In conclusion, the "Literature review report" document provides a comprehensive and insightful overview of the rEdESIGN project's WP2 activities. It highlights the critical role of the social economy in fostering sustainable and inclusive development in rural areas. The document's meticulous research, analysis, and recommendations offer a valuable roadmap for promoting social entrepreneurship and strengthening food systems in Crete, Sicily, and Andalusia. By fostering collaboration, building capacity, and leveraging innovation, the rEdESIGN project has the potential to make a significant and lasting impact on rural communities, contributing to economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The document serves as a vital resource for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in rural development and the social economy. It underscores the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing the complex challenges faced by rural regions and unlocking their full potential.

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ANNEX 1: GOOD PRACTICES DATABASE



Successful social initiatives in rural economy sectors	a) Initiatives fostering innovation, cooperation and development of the knowledge and advisory services in the sectors of Hortexa and Agro products.	b) Innovation of Social Entrepreneurship for agri-food enterprises restructuring and modernisation	Integration and cooperation c) among producers in agri-food sectors and d) other sectors (education, tourism,...) facilitating diversification and safeguarding of rural traditions, natural heritage and landscapes.	Relevance of processes e) Participatory approaches - networks and social partnerships - including public or private investments	Relevance: f) Governance solutions to political/strategic contexts: through positive transformation of businesses, learning tools and capacity building.	Innovative outputs g) Degree of effectiveness and efficiency in producing outputs and outcomes.	h) transferability of results or to scale it up to other contexts/settings/countries j) develop policy recommendations	i) sustainability maintained in the long-term with available funds or human resources
RUR UP: Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas	new e-learning blended modules through an educational transdisciplinary approach and innovative pedagogies such as problem-based learning.			International Partnership from Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Croatia, France	Strengthen collaboration between High Education Institutions and potential regional and cross-regional employers	Elaboration of a Bank of Case Studies	HEI curricula based on learning outcomes	Development of a Digital Teaching Platform and Digital Learning Resource
Food System Hubs Innovating towards Fast Transition by 2030	FoodSHIFT Accelerator Labs for maturing, combining, upscaling and multiplying existing food system initiatives across nine front-runner city regions and twenty-seven follower city-regions.			30 partners comprised of 7 municipalities, 8 SMEs, 8 NGOs and 7 researchers from 12 European countries.	Food System Transition Facilitating a sustainable transition where SMEs, NGOs, local governments, researchers and citizens are co-developing the food system of the future	Citizen empowerment Job creation Promoting job creation by assisting food sector start-ups, supporting business development		Maturing and scaling-up food system innovations
TOURNET: Cross-sector networks for sustainable tourism	stimulating innovation in tourism training programs		Cross-Sector Tourism Networks for Sustainable Tourism (CS2T)	Greenland, Spain, Greece, Montenegro	grouping small tourism entrepreneurs in a sustainable destination and act as an umbrella environment to help entrepreneurs.			
The Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) Network	Development and search of methods, tools and practices for sharing, transfer and co-generation of knowledge	Growth of an entrepreneurship culture among young people, entrepreneurship creation and innovation			Enhancement and the reinforcement of institutions and innovation support organizations (SO) involved in the innovation processes			
LANDARE: Cooperation between consumers for organic consumption in direct relationship with producers	A cooperative supermarket of the metropolitan area of Pamplona joined to have access to ecological and healthy food at popular prices. It is a participative organization, committed to values and benefits for the community, healthy food, agroecology and responsible consumption.	In this way, a lower price is obtained for consumers and a greater margin for producers, forging a win-win relationship.		Organic consumers' association without a lucrative purpose: 2.800 member families to get variety, quality and fair prices in the shopping basket.	It has 25 employees who work with division of responsibilities and horizontally, with participatory decision-making through assemblies	buying directly from 122 producers and creating long-lasting relationships based on mutual trust. The sale prices are established so that the 80% goes to producers and 20% to management costs such as salaries, rentals.		
Agrifood Partnership of Western Macedonia	Collaboration with research and academic community. Meetings, professional training and consulting seminars, market research, participation in exhibitions and more.	Agrifood Partnership of Western Macedonia (APWM) is a civil non-profit making organization was intended to upgrade region's "basket of goods".	Support, promotion and recognition of agri-food products produced in Western Macedonia. Provision of promotional tool and know-how available to help local producers to be more extroverted. Creation of synergies (clusters) amongst the agri-food, tourism, and catering sectors.	The organization's main beneficiaries are the regions' agri-food producers, processors and other businesses operating in the sector of the food industry as well. Stakeholders are chambers of commerce, agricultural cooperatives, universities, federations.			Continuous raising and certification of the quality of the local food products.	
Ovinova Operational Group - an innovative business model for transhumance		New business and management model for livestock farming that contributes to preserving biodiversity while giving incentives for young people to remain and work in rural areas					Management practices helps realises the restoration and fertilization of the grass and creates opportunities for insects and young people to spread across the territory, helping to restore and preserve biodiversity.	Innovative, productive, and competitive business model for transhumance grazing creates new employment opportunities for young people as shepherds and have a positive impact on biodiversity.
Open Farms	Promote a deeper understanding of the existing needs of farmers, providing opportunities for meeting, reflection and discussions on common challenges, and generate innovative solutions in a participatory way.					Evaluation highlights the project's key achievements, such as promoting peer-to-peer collaboration, positive interactions among participants and the sharing of farming practices, fulfilling the project's objectives. The project effectively promotes learning and engagement, offering concrete benefits.	OFs offer a challenge-based learning experience on sustainability, quality, innovation and local development as part of the 2023-2027 CAP	
La Juncquera regenerative farm and rural development initiative	Through the Regeneration Academy, participants learn about agroecology, soil conservation and organic farming practices, promoting the revitalisation of rural communities.	1 400 hectares of agricultural land-which focuses on implementing regenerative and sustainable farming practices while offering educational and entrepreneurial opportunities to rural youth.						Since its inception, the project has restored 2 500 hectares, planted 30 000 trees, and trained over 1 000 young farmers and professionals in regenerative agriculture techniques.
Food routes in Emilia-Romagna - a capacity building and promotion tool		The high hills of the Parma and Piacenza provinces in the Emilia-Romagna region promote local agricultural specialties and attract visitors to the countryside.	Three food routes: 'Ham & Wine of the Parma Hills', 'Pancetta Mushrooms of Borgoraro' and 'Wines & Flavours of the Piacenza Hills'. Foster stronger operational links between the bodies that manage the three food routes.	Bottom-up approach, a common strategy for communication and marketing of the three food routes under a unified brand	To realise these food trails, the territory's LAG organised a series of capacity building activities for local stakeholders and produced promotional materials for the three visitor routes under a common brand identity.	Improved management of the three food routes by fostering closer collaboration between public and private operators and by involving younger operators.	The number of participating entities has increased by approximately 20% on each route.	Representatives of each route now sit on the board of the 'Destinazione Turistica Emilia' promotional programme
Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural areas in Mediterranean Countries	Train trainers (ToT), youth workers, job counsellors & young people in rural areas between 18 and 30 years to develop their knowledge, skills, and competencies in relation to entrepreneurship and EU opportunities, to contribute to their personal, linguistic and professional development.			By means of cooperation among different stakeholders at local and international level the project will hold Courses piloted with 60 potential youth entrepreneurs.	Fostering collaboration among Educational and vocational organisations from six Countries, the partnership ensures to provide solutions to the challenges and difficulties of the young entrepreneurs from rural areas.	Courses piloted will supply different perspectives in youth work supporting young people develop their business ideas, socialize, develop their entrepreneurship, increase their opportunities in rural areas, develop their self-esteem and reveal new ideas and professional skills.	Promote the use of the 'Entrepreneurship Competences' framework to identify their talents and strengthen their job market. The training material is still transferable and accessible to other youth organizations in the Mediterranean region.	The expected long term impact of the project is that the businesses created both during the project lifetime and afterwards help stabilize the young local population of the rural areas involved through sustainable activities out of the tourism seasonal works.
Carbon Farming Med	Knowledge Sharing: Disseminating best practices and knowledge to encourage widespread adoption of carbon farming in two key management systems for the Med region: regenerative agriculture and agroforestry systems.	Measuring soil carbon capture and creating the first cross-border platform which promotes sustainable farming practices and economic growth. Creating a Carbon Credit Market. Establishing and promoting a Mediterranean market for carbon credits derived from regenerative agricultural practices.		Collaboration across borders and the use of innovative university-industry-government-public-environment interactions within a knowledge economy. It brings together nine organizations from six countries - Spain, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Greece, France, each contributing unique expertise to achieve a common goal.			The project has developed a revision of the current legal status of Carbon Farming activities in the European Union.	CFM advances climate neutrality and fosters regional cooperation to combat climate change. A viable green business model enables them to generate additional revenue through carbon credits and access funding opportunities, promoting both environmental and economic sustainability.
SECON-An initiative to boost the social economy in EU regions	Advancing Social Economy through Knowledge Sharing among regions including regional and interregional learning initiatives, cooperation in the production of studies and reports, to foster knowledge exchange endeavors.			Key regional stakeholders from Germany, Greece, Belgium, Romania, Poland, Portugal, Latvia, Spain, Bulgaria to advance the concept of fostering social economy innovation and cooperation across regions. The meetings and study visits provide a valuable platform for knowledge exchange in the social economy sector.	The cooperation between Regional Administrations maximizes the ECOCOR contribution to the ongoing green and digital transitions through regional strategies, ensuring a multilevel commitment for a sustainable and inclusive future.			Facilitating social enterprises' access to responsible public procurement and funding instruments. SECON strives to generate sustainable revenue streams and foster financial self-sufficiency.
RuralYouthFuture - Improving the role of youth policies for rural sustainable development	Foster knowledge and experience sharing activities to facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions in youth employment policies for sustainable rural development			Spain, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia, Portugal, Belgium, and Serbia	Regional administrations' cooperation has a good chance to be effective in defining common policies to apply through the EU funds for reducing inequalities between urban and rural areas by attracting and retaining a talented and youthful workforce.	Foster sustainable rural development through the promotion of digital skills and emerging work models. The project platform is a tool to submit and share good practices, inspire others and find the resources needed to help their implementation development.	A comprehensive framework for implementing youth employment policies at municipal, regional, and national levels	Regional tools and financing support can empower young individuals in rural territories by providing job opportunities and improved working conditions.
InnovAgriMed - Social Innovation in the Agri-food sector for Women's Empowerment in the Mediterranean Sea Basin	Rural social innovation model, tailored according to the local needs, ensures that women after an intensive training programme will have the needed skills to become entrepreneurs, transforming them into agents of change in the rural contexts;	Boosting women and NEETS labor participation and entrepreneurship, by leveraging on the potential of the agri-food sector	Implementation and scaling up of Rural Social Innovation (RSI) a sustainable value model in the agri-food sector. RSI redefines the boundaries between organizations and the community, addressing broader societal challenges by seeking economic, social and environmental sustainability, balancing tradition and innovation and explicitly seeking community development at the local level.	2 agri-business fora to match job profiles with local business needs; 4 agreements for a local agri-food stakeholder network to help match between job offers and demand from Spain, Tunisia, Palestine, Italy		Effective results were 140 women trained in marketable skills in the agri-food sector; 4 job profiles defined according to the needs of the agri-food sector; 4 coaching and mentoring programmes for women on Rural Social Innovation; 112 women with a sustainable job by the end of the project.		This will allow not only to find a job for women but also a 'sustainable' rural context, reducing poverty and boosting social inclusion.
Enact - Enabling Social Innovation Entrepreneurship in Agri-food through Digital Transition	specific requirements for the digital transition of the social economy actors embedded within the agri-food ecosystem	promote digital transition and entrepreneurship among the social economy actors in the agri-food value chain, a transnational capacity building programme that incorporates a training of trainers' initiative for 30 individuals to empower social economy enabling organizations, as well as virtual and local training sessions directed at min. 200 participants to sustain this project effect.		The project provides comprehensive European coverage, engaging a European network in Belgium and social economy organizations from Austria, Lithuania, Portugal, and Spain within the consortium. In addition, stakeholder engagement strategies are carefully supported by collaborative networks and amplify the project impact within the agri-food of the social economy.	Establishment of innovative ecosystem networks that transcend borders, promoting collective resilience and mutual support among min. 270 social economy actors.	Leveraging on innovative events such as a transnational Hackathon and a Matchathon and disbursing 200,000 EUR direct financial support, the project encourages the co-creation of digital innovative solutions that can shape the future of the agri-food sector.	Recipients are Big Corporations, Entrepreneurs, SMEs in the agri-food sector that are subject to strong external pressures, such as a rising demand for food world wide, competition for land, globalisation of trade, threats from animal/plant diseases, environmental changes or public health considerations.	To survive and thrive, the partners work to become more efficient and sustainable and take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technological developments.
Space-Nest - New European Bauhaus for Social economy and Transformative living	The project consists of several actions to promote the building of a European network of regional and local authorities combining the principles of social economy, recognized for its contribution to local development, with the concepts of the New European Bauhaus and the European Green Deal.	Recover and enhance abandoned rural spaces through facilitating the creation and/or empowerment of socially oriented enterprises related to new green economic activities with a specific focus on renewable energy, sustainable art and craft and manufacturing, green buildings and architecture and circular economy.	Identify key stakeholders within specific communities and select both local success stories and EU-level models to be shared and exchanged during 3 social economy missions in Spain, Italy, Slovenia, in which 72 social economy stakeholders and 12 project partners staff members will take part.			Key recommendations for EU stakeholders will be created as well as a sound dissemination and exploitation strategy for uptake of project results both within the involved regions and at the EU level.		The dynamic exchange initiated during missions will facilitate the co-creation of solutions within the social economy domain and will drive the formulation of targeted territorial action plans connected to the New European Bauhaus, which include concrete actions to be implemented and maintained in the long term.
Digital Scaling for Social Enterprises-Empowering Impact and Innovation - DIGI-SEE	hybrid approach to learning with e-learning formats, face-to-face training, tailored complementary services (peer-exchanges, mentorships, study visits & match-making activities), a hackathon for SMEs+ trainee-trainer event for SESOs.	The unique approach doesn't stop at providing knowledge but integrates digitalization directly into the scaling strategies of Social Enterprises (SE).	Hybrid training approach revolutionising how businesses operate, innovate, and grow by offering training to 260 individuals, a comprehensive capacity-building package to 45 local, national, or regional capacity building activities and direct financial support to 260 SES.	DIGI-SEE has been developed by a consortium of 8 leading Social Enterprise-digital ecosystem, Latvia, Spain, Bulgaria to address the Transition Pathway (TP) of Digital as well as Green' TP actors in Netherlands, Sweden, France, Ukraine, Belgium, Germany, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Cyprus. These partners bring diverse expertise from various social enterprise ecosystems, creating a project with strong European and transnational significance.	DIGI-SEE will 1) map skills gaps & needs, 2) develop its own Capacity-Building Package made of existing materials curated for the project & original contents delivered via a bespoke and modular approach, 3)integrate an AI tool for pre- and post-training evaluation to guide participants and evaluate outcomes.	Equip social enterprises (SEs) and their support organizations (SESOs) with the digital tools and skills they need to scale and enhance their impact.	A key component of the methodology is the use of AI-powered tools to assess skills before and after training, providing personalised learning pathways and enhancing the relevance and efficiency of the training modules.	The project's "train-the-trainer" model ensures that Support Organizations are equipped to continue providing digitalization support to SEs long after the project's conclusion, promoting sustainability and long-term impact. By aligning with the EU's priorities on digitalization and sustainability, the project will play a key role in supporting social enterprises as drivers of social innovation and economic resilience.
Social Economy Laboratories for the New Bauhaus in European Rural Communities - elabauhaus	The Wiki platform will be a digital, flexible and powerful tool for collaboration that will serve as a repository of the contents of the missions and the web links and mappings of the detected best practices, properly organised.		the partners promote and share good practices and success stories applying the New European Bauhaus tools and participatory methodologies. Co-designing local action plans and a roadmap to boost the green and digital transition and promote more resilient, sustainable and inclusive employment and social opportunities in rural areas.	The innovative activity develops co-design and co-creation laboratories based on the New European Bauhaus participatory methodologies. Co-designing local action plans and a roadmap to boost the green and digital transition and promote more resilient, sustainable and inclusive employment and social opportunities in rural areas.	The project effectiveness relies on the partners' capacity to give room to the collective intelligence of local communities (public authorities, social economy enterprises and organizations), stakeholders and citizens. Cooperatives association, Municipalities, Agencies for rural development) as key factors of resilience, well-being, social cohesion and sustainability.	Cooperatives association, Municipalities, Agencies for rural development) as key factors also to implement a broad dissemination, capitalisation and transfer programme to increase knowledge of the local action plans as well as of the New European Bauhaus approach, towards the long-term sustainability of rural economies.		The Wiki platform in four languages will also allow interested people outside the project to continue working and modifying the content of solutions within the social economy domain and will drive the formulation of targeted territorial action plans connected to the New European Bauhaus, which include concrete actions to be implemented and maintained in the long term.

Paths for rural innovation - PARI	PARI proposes a multi faceted approach designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of rural development dynamics and their connection to Social economy and the CSEI concept. This incorporates various research techniques to ensure a holistic perspective: literature overview/ desk research, missions and field data collection, comparative analysis, participatory pilots aimed at the formulation of local plans for setting up CSEI.	The expected impact on local public authorities and social economy entities focuses on the creation of new linkages and collaborations, breaking down silo approaches, institutional and organisational barriers. PARI's exploration of cooperation also with informal community initiatives (such as those presented in the surveyed case studies and EU-funded projects) aligns with social economy principles, acknowledging them as vital sources of innovation alongside institutions and other economic actors.	Clusters for Social Innovation, Research Organisations, Municipalities, regions, associations of enterprises are key actors to support the all-encompassing approach in rural communities of Portugal, Sweden, and Spain.	The PARI activities focus on building a new coherent strategy and methodology for the development of CSEIs (Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation) that addresses these common issues and harnesses most of each territory's advantages and experiences, breaking silo approaches and supporting local capacity-building.				
Cultivating rights and citizenship- Social agriculture in the Sardinia territory		The wine production is an economic and cultural value of the territory which includes a "designation of origin" (DOC Carignano del Sulcis) and two "indications of geographical typicality" (IGT Vali di Ponto Pino and IGT Isola dei Nuraghi).		The Local Action Group Sulcis acts to promote sustainable development of its rural areas, with a participatory approach. The LAG has been collaborating in several projects on the themes of the valorisation and promotion of territories, short supply chain and social agriculture.		For the 2023-2027 Programming period, cooperation projects develop three fields: Diversification in agriculture, Sustainable tourism (enogastronomic and cultural itineraries), Internationalisation of enterprises. In 2024-2025 the Ponto Sulcis has launched a call to support tangible and intangible investments by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MPMI) in the areas of accommodation, catering, tourism services, culture and environment and wine tourism.	The wine production is an economic and cultural value of the territory which includes a "designation of origin" (DOC Carignano del Sulcis) and two "indications of geographical typicality" (IGT Vali di Ponto Pino and IGT Isola dei Nuraghi).	Over the years, the LAG has developed several cooperation projects, both locally and transnationally - with other LAGs in Sardinia and other European Countries - as well as with other groups similar in objectives and approach.
Social Integration Partnership - SIP	Network of Educational Farms - Agricultural and Agri-tourism Companies - that host schools, families, groups of adults and young generations in a multi-functional perspective, for the realization of therapeutic and rehabilitation activities.	The multisectorial action - food production and social services - creates a link between town and country, and recognises the rural enterprises a strategic role within which to combine competitiveness requirements, profitability, social quality, food safety, integrated development, eco-compatibility and protection of rural areas.	SIP works on Social Integration paths through agriculture and educational farm tools. The project specific targets are linked to the psychic, psychomotor area, in particular children with difficulties, helped by daily contacts with the agricultural and natural environment in the farms involved. Activities are carried out in the gardens, fields and fruit orchards according to seasonality as well as with animals.	The Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences of the University of Perugia ensures the scientific contribution and validation of the model. The participating farms and project partners - Societies of social cooperatives, Socio-sanitary cooperatives, Educational farms, agricultural enterprises of organic products - represent the privileged places for the offer of therapeutic-rehabilitation.		Educational farms providing therapeutic and training services: the ability lies in finding in agriculture and animal activities space for new therapeutic and rehabilitation paths, as well as safeguarding environmental, food and biodiversity economic activities.	The introduction of new regulations on social agriculture and social farms builds a welfare need and the possibility of increasing agricultural incomes in order to maintain a sustainable economy in rural areas.	
All in the same field		through the cultivation, processing and sale of the products people living in situations of fragility are involved in active and inclusive paths.	The activities integrate many things building an economically sustainable solidarity enterprise: the organic farm; a social cooperative; a school.	'All in the same field' is born in 2018 from the meeting between an agricultural company, a social cooperative, a training institute, a foundation, the province of Trento and the towns of Civezzano and the Edmund Mach Foundation and the LAG Trentino East.				
TERRA GAIA	The farming activity carried out by the cooperative focuses on the modernisation of the spaces to allow a more efficient management of the company logistics. Increased quantities of processed products and greater differentiation of farm products. The activities concern also the social assistance and services for disadvantaged people.	The project includes the renovation of part of the farm spaces and the purchase of equipment for the improvement of the processing and conservation of agricultural products, the creation of an e-commerce platform for the enhancement of the direct sales network.	The same spaces have also been used for training activities, educational workshops and the organization of events related to social agricultural activity.			Effective benefits for local communities come from the activities covering social needs and occupation in innovative services. 'Do ut Des' project promotes on-the-job training for disadvantaged people, the activation of the School of Agriculture with the intervention of external experts and offering the possibility of experiencing professional internships in the different working contexts (cultivation, processing and distribution).		Thanks to the financial support of the Community of Valle Alta (Valisugana and Bressana), Terra Gaia has set up a stable team for planning, planning and coordination of the agriculture and social activities (the gardens of Assizzi and Bosentini) creating a District of Solidarity Economy (DSE).
GOEL		GOEL Bio includes organic farming and food production, processing and distribution as well as bio-cosmetics, restaurants and catering. It also runs Amal, a restaurant using only organic food from GOEL farms and guaranteeing fair wages and conditions to staff. GOEL Welfare runs a shelter and skills workshop for new migrants. It also works to support disabled people, orphans, abused children, troubled teenagers and people suffering from mental health problems.	GOEL is a non-profit community movement in southern Italy creating space for many activities. It builds social enterprises near the poorest community in the health sector, to help the very weak people, in tourism sector, through its "Responsible Tourism": to offer a new image of Calabria; agriculture remains at the heart of the region's economy, together with a reviving traditional weaving crafts.	a community movement based on sustainable and ethical social enterprise. Its network of co-operating enterprises covers a wide range of economic sectors - including organic agriculture, health services, food distribution, hospitality, responsible tourism, eco-fashion, textiles and organic cosmetics.				Campus GOEL is an incubator for Calabrian start-ups. It works especially with entrepreneurs developing an ethical economy. Creating space for disadvantaged and marginalised groups and promoting living social and economic models to build a legal and prosperous state free of mafia control.
Casa Mesola	The structure, of more than 600 square meters, has become a multipurpose center for training people with disabilities and new farmers, focused on agronomic techniques and vateal innovation related to the cultivation of asparagus and other local crops.		Casa Mesola aims to promote a large social farming network and the agricultural and social realities of the area of Basso Ferrarese at entering the values of reciprocity, sharing, welcome, cooperation.	The courses are carried out in collaboration with the Navarra Foundation, together with the Istituto Virgilio for the preparation of classrooms and the implementation of specific educational paths to develop new knowledge and professional skills useful for employment in agriculture. In cooperation with "Piu Felice" Association, Casa Mesola carries out initiatives in favour of fragile children.				LAG Delta 2000 is a long lasting value of social innovation of Emilia Romagna Region.
AGRICOLAUT	'AGRICOLAUT' project financed by the LAG Metropoli Est (Sicily) develops social services that support and accompany medical, psychological and rehabilitation therapies. The methodology uses differentiated spaces for training of small groups; organization of theoretical training workshops and practice; use of Alternative Communication (multimedia strategies, audiovisual, signage and visual strategies especially useful to frail people with intellectual disabilities); individualized projects for people with disabilities using innovative tools (e.g., specific techniques for potential analysis, specific observation methodologies).		The project aims to diversify agricultural activity, exploring farm resources and pooling sectoral expertise and specializations of other project partners, to create a model capable of generating significant benefits in terms of socio-educational and social welfare interventions, as well as economic sustainability.	The methodology adopted involves networking on the ground, with agreements and inter-institutional collaboration on specific projects.		The effectiveness of the project lies in the presence of social workers and specialized tutors and in the involvement of families (counselling, identification of associative paths).	Responding to the needs expressed by the local community and implementing the guidelines of the regional Unitary Plan for Autism, the project aims to create a model of socio-educational intervention for people with various forms of and especially with autism spectrum disorders, generating changes also in the productive tissues of the farm involved.	
Welcome Paths: agri social empowerment	environmental education: organization of trekking routes; dynamic workshops on the environment, recycling, reuse and environmental resources; food education: aimed at the target group of the tourist package, it discloses information about the crops and products of local farms, typical products of the partner municipalities and their use in the Mediterranean diet. The workshops were attended by people with physical or cognitive disabilities.	social agriculture, with paths of social inclusion for disadvantaged groups, with the production of goods and dissemination activities; these activities have allowed the employment of 0 migrants and 3 women, otherwise left out of the labour market.	creation of tourist packages and experiential workshops for the companies involved, new slow tourist routes inspired by principles of social and human aggregation and inclusion, in favor of all segments of the population (from young to old).					The creation of tourist packages has resulted in an increase in attendance in the region by 20%, compared to the previous year.
Madonie Agro-Salute	Thanks to the involvement of professionals, social farming activities were carried out, alternating with recreational/educational activities, mediation with animals and also nature excursions. This approach ensured that a productive relationship was established with the participants who benefited enormously from the project.		innovative development of the enterprise allowing a diversification of the services offered to guests who choose forms of accessible tourism. All activities carried out for the project are integrable with the main activity of the various partners. The collaborative form of the institutions involved, and the type of activities implemented have highlighted new economic opportunities.	The project involved different actors with different activities: Health District 30 - ASP of Palermo; University of Palermo; Union of the Madonie Municipalities; Coop. Social Aquamarina; SSD Adventure Time srl; Tenuta San Giampa Farm; Petrucci Madonie nursery; Stakeholders in the territory (municipalities, social health districts, schools, host communities). The activities were carried out by a group (ATS) made up of companies and associations of the third sector, in addition to which several public bodies, the University of Palermo and the Health District of the territory were involved.				The project was funded by PSR Sicilia. The same can be replicated in other territories. The partners, all of whom carry out activities which are different from each other, have integrated with great success and have been able to offer different but complementary activities, enriching the experience of the participants
Mediterranean Diet: When Brand meets People			Cooperation locally and transnationally among quadruple helix stakeholders boosts Social Innovation, digitalisation and sharing economy. The transnational cooperation in the production chain of the MD cluster serves to create new businesses and stimulate creativity and innovation in traditional crafts and productions, while providing contributions and good practices in maintaining ecological balance.	Cooperation between 13 Euro-mediterranean regions consolidated by social innovation of Local Living Laboratories aimed at promoting rural sustainable growth through exploring the Mediterranean cultural identity. The multisectorial contribution of different economic and scientific actors, merged with public administrations and local communities, has determined a convincing basis which has underpinned a common commitment of many stakeholders toward the follow up of the practical results of the project.	Starting from the MD.net achievements, two EU cooperation strategies have been set up: a MDC initiative to support rural communities in the transformation of traditional economies in smarter niche tourism offer toward an integrated MD Euro-Cluster, a professional training for youth entrepreneurship focused on the consolidation of technological innovation and traditional safeguard to cope with the global market and promotes the Med territories (and healthy products) as international destination of tourism itineraries.			



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