

## Research Report

**COMMITTEE** : Solidarity (ILO6)

**ISSUE** : How can the Social and Solidarity Economy be developed on a global scale ?

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### INTRODUCTION



Hello everyone!

My name is Jasmine Benlechhab, I'm 16 and I'll be chairing the Solidarity committee alongside Dahlia Djelouah and Shirel Nakache.

I'm in the German section at the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire, and I live in Gex, a French town near Geneva. In my free time, I do a lot of sports, especially mountain biking and cross-country skiing. This is my second FerMUN conference, as I was an admin at FerMUN 2023, which gave me an insight into the organisation of such an event. I'll also be taking part in BERMUN in November 2023, where I'll be playing a role in the Youth Assembly.

I am particularly interested in the social and solidarity economy (SSE) because it offers a more sustainable and equitable model of the economy. Unlike more common economic models, which aim to maximise profits, the SSE aims to meet society's needs while promoting honest and solid relationships between individuals, communities and institutions. By supporting people, particularly the most disadvantaged, it offers a viable solution for rebalancing economic, social and environmental objectives at global and local levels. In this way, the SSE represents a promising solution for a fairer and more sustainable future thanks to its focus on solidarity and cooperation.

I hope that this report will make your research easier and open up avenues for debate that will encourage a constructive exchange of ideas. Have a good read !

### KEY WORDS

**Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE):** This concept is based on the action of companies, organisations and other entities that carry out economic, social and environmental projects serving a collective interest. It takes the form of cooperation, mutual aid, participatory governance, empowerment and long-term independence.

**Sustainable development:** Sustainable development is a concept of development that takes a long-term view by integrating environmental and social constraints into the economy. It satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Non-governmental organisation (NGO):** Independent, non-profit-making organisation serving the public interest. It implements awareness-raising, cooperation and mutual aid projects.

**Cooperative:** Autonomous association of people united voluntarily around common aspirations. It seeks to meet their economic, social and cultural needs through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

**Mutual:** A non-profit, global health player that organises a large number of preventive health initiatives. It offers its members healthcare and provident cover who make regular payments into a fund that will pay their costs if they have a loss, accident, etc.

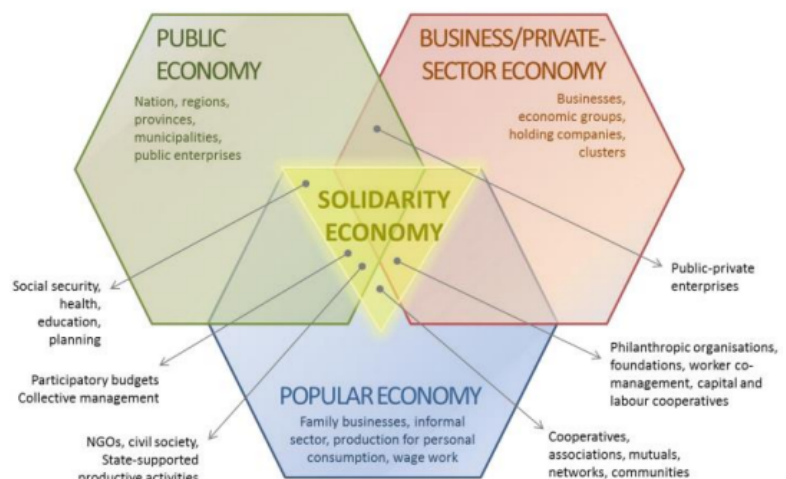
**Interstate cooperation:** Operations and policies involving financial, material or human resource transfers between countries, NGOs and multilaterals in various fields, in support of joint programmes: scientific, cultural, diplomatic, military or economic. Several states may organise in order to help one country, or one local authority may support another local authority.

**Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** The Least Developed Countries are a group of 46 of the world's poorest countries. They are considered as such following their voluntary inclusion on the United Nations list. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human capital.

## OVERVIEW

### 1. The SSE, an increasingly widespread model

The SSE is an economic model that is becoming increasingly widespread throughout the world. It provides social and health services, maintains and creates jobs and restores supply chains, particularly food supply chains. The SSE has various organisational methods (participative governance, territorial anchoring, hybrid resources) to help the most vulnerable people. The social economy is also expected to guarantee equity in the digital and ecological transition. Social economy initiatives and local development create support systems for communities in need to alleviate their difficulties. SSE initiatives do not just meet social needs. They also force us to take into account the importance of social movements and to build a balance of power that enables initiatives to lead to new public policies. In addition, the SSE promotes the need to build new institutions to ensure the sustainability of the activities generated and to guarantee greater democracy.



*The components of the Social and Solidarity Economy; source: (Coraggio, 2015)*

## 2. COVID-19 and the SSE

Numerous reports from international agencies have observed that the social and solidarity economy is cushioning the socio-economic effects of the Covid 19 crisis. Indeed, Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights, points out that "the social economy has the potential to reshape the post-Covid economy through inclusive and sustainable models leading to a more equitable ecological, economic and social transformation". During the Covid-19 pandemic, the SSE encouraged the production of masks, support for online education and social services.

The health crisis demonstrated the dependencies and fragilities of the globalised economic model. Developed countries and emerging powers were able to create and deploy their vaccines globally, while developing countries, lacking the means to produce a vaccine, had to buy them abroad. The pandemic proved that solidarity is not a country's main priority, and that it only comes into play once the necessary steps have been taken in one's own country. Admittedly, the SSE was present during the Covid crisis, but it could have been even more important. Volunteers, for example, provided food to the elderly, who were the most vulnerable to the pandemic, and also kept them company, as many of them found themselves isolated due to the lockdown. In addition, doctors and nurses volunteered to return from their leave or retirement to support and assist hospital staff, who were very quickly overwhelmed by the number of patients to be treated.

The European Union also showed its solidarity and cooperation by purchasing a large quantity of vaccines for all its member countries. On top of this, the European Commission and the European Union have pledged more than €5 billion to COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access), the global initiative to ensure equitable access to coronavirus vaccines worldwide.

## 3. Sustainable development and the SSE

### a. The NGOs

SSE is strongly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set by the United Nations, to be achieved by 2030. NGOs operate in various fields and their actions are associated with the SSE. Indeed, the way NGOs operate can be considered a pillar of the SSE, as they create solidarity projects to help and support disadvantaged populations. They are non-profit-making organisations, which makes it easier to set up different programmes. However, as NGOs operate on the basis of the donations and grants they receive, they are not totally independent.

### b. Cooperatives and mutual societies

Cooperatives and mutual societies are the pioneers of the SSE. Mutuals are founded on the basis of professional or territorial solidarity.

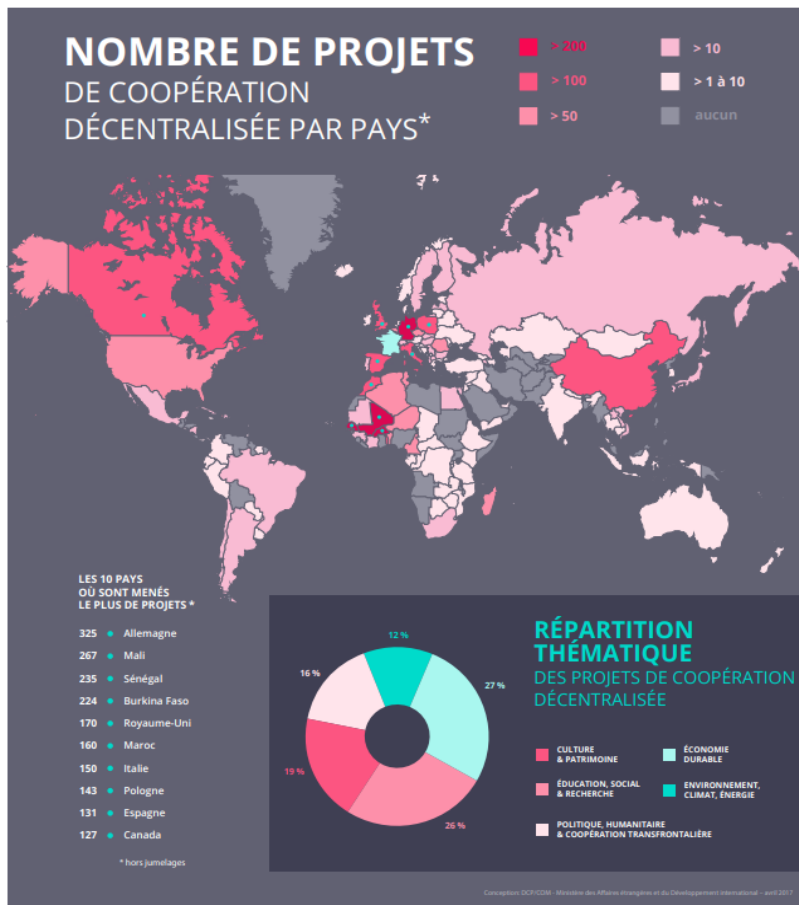
Their aim is to provide risk cover (health, insurance) shared equitably by all members on a not-for-profit basis. They cover more than 44 million people in France, for example, according to the French Public Investment Bank (Bpifrance).

Cooperatives can be active in the cultural field, helping to save traditional cultural enterprises and ensure continuity of activity and employment. This was the case for the Aron Theatre Cooperative, which was set up in 2009 in Ontario, Canada, to save a local cinema that was on the verge of going out of business and had over 450 members. Cooperatives are also able to set up mutual guarantee funds to help creative professionals receive their wages regularly within a set period of time, regardless of client payments, as well as comprehensive insurance cover. A problem for cooperatives is viability and the ability to reach a certain size,

as existing financial tools are inadequate to effectively support expansion and the replication of good practice.

#### 4. Interstate cooperation on the SSE

Several countries cooperate with others, particularly developed countries that help developing countries. There are different types of cooperation: countries can provide help directly from one government to another, or it can be delegated to local authorities or international programmes (through the UN or NGOs). The map below shows decentralised cooperation projects per country in 2017. It can be seen that it is mainly developed countries that run this type of programme to support less economically advanced countries. However, cooperation can bring together two developing countries, an emerging power and an LDC or two developed countries on specific projects. The countries coloured in red are running the most decentralised cooperation projects (over 200). The other countries, the lighter the colour, the fewer projects they have, and the countries in grey have none at all.



#### a. North-South cooperation

A publication on cooperation, international solidarity and SSE from the *Réseau des collectivités territoriales pour une économie solidaire (RTES)* (=Network of local authorities for a solidarity economy) in July 2019, presents the cooperation programme between the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region in France and the Plateau Central region in Burkina Faso, as an example of North-South cooperation between local authorities. This June 2019 initiative is based on the structuring of a support offer for SSE projects. It handles: a partnership of the Regional Chamber of SSE (CRESS in French) to structure a support offer for local SSE

projects, the creation of a regional platform for o-interest loans without collateral, based on the model of the initiative platforms in France and support for community groups, such as a women's dairy cooperative. In 2018, the cooperation project aims to:

- Develop interconnaissance between SSE actors in the Central Plateau and actors in New Aquitaine,
- Provide an insight into global SSE dynamics and provide the keys to facilitating acculturation to the SSE for players in Burkina Faso.

- Build the first elements of an action plan to develop long-term cooperation on SSE between the Central Plateau and New Aquitaine. An initial phase of getting to know each other and identifying shared values (the term "Social Solidarity Economy" is totally absent from semantics in Burkina Faso) enabled CRESS to confirm RÉZAS (Réseau Zoodo Action Solidarité = Zoodo Action Solidarity Network) as the pillar of the cooperation action. RÉZAS aims to structure non-profit organisations (Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Burkina Faso) with collective governance.

According to the RTES, CRESS and RÉZAS have set themselves the goal of establishing a two-year project with the aim of working on 4 themes: agriculture, housing for young people, support for business start-ups and education. Each of the two organisations has taken on trainees and young people on civic service to help with the project. A SSE forum on the Central Plateau has been organised for summer 2019 to showcase the region's initiatives and encourage people to take part in international cooperation projects.

### b. South-South cooperation

South-South cooperation has long been strongly encouraged and organised by China. Below is the logo of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was officially created following the 2000 Ministerial Conference held in Beijing from 10 to 12 October 2000. According to the forum's official website, the letter "C" in red on the left represents China, while the logo as a whole is reminiscent of the letter "a", which symbolises Africa. This is a clear indication of the solidarity and cooperation that has been established between China and Africa. Green evokes peace and development, while red embodies vitality and prosperity. The objectives of this forum were to engage in consultations on an equal footing in order to broaden consensus, strengthen friendship and promote cooperation.



Since the beginning of the 21st century, a group of Chinese experts and technicians have been working in Nigeria as part of a South-South Cooperation project launched by the FAO. This two-phase project, funded mainly by the Nigerian government itself, supports the country's National Programme for Food Security. During the first phase, which ran from 2003 to 2007, 500 Chinese technicians carried out field visits, demonstrations and micro-projects. Not only did this help to boost yields and livelihoods, it also led the farmers' organisations that had been supported to replicate the techniques taught. In total, 190 experts and technicians helped Nigeria's agricultural sector to improve productivity and build the capacity of farmers and processors, farm managers and extension staff. Following the success of this project, the second phase was completed in 2015.

China continued to be involved in South-South cooperation during the period of the coronavirus. According to a speech by the former State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Mr Wang Yi, at a videoconference on poverty eradication and South-South cooperation in September 2020, China has provided donations totalling more than 400 billion yuan (around €50 billion) and implemented nearly 3,000 aid projects. Faced with COVID-19, China has carried out the largest emergency humanitarian operation since the founding of New China. In fact, the former minister states that 34 groups of medical experts have been sent to 32 countries and 283 aid packages have been delivered to 150 countries and four international organisations. China plans to set up a cooperation mechanism between Chinese and African hospitals, and to establish a global humanitarian response depot and hub in China. Mr Wang Yi stressed that once developed and deployed,

several Chinese vaccines will be a global public good and will be provided as a priority to other developing countries as part of the health crisis.

The speech by China's former foreign minister shows that China is heavily involved in South-South cooperation, and that it is seeking to establish a good image with other countries, in order to represent a driving force in the establishment of interstate cooperation.

## RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

**2015**

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - (here):** UN goals to be achieved by 2030 including in particular goals 7, 12 and 17 which emphasise more balanced and responsible cooperation.

**21/06/2019**

**ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (here):** this declaration sets out all the points that the ILO wishes to improve in the future, including in particular clause II-A-ix (p.5) concerning the SSE and clauses IV-D (p.8) and IV-F (p.9) which promote international cooperation on social, trade, financial, economic and environmental policies.

**18/04/2023**

**United Nations General Assembly resolution (here)** on the promotion of the social/solidarity-based economy for sustainable development. This resolution promotes the implementation of the SSE in the countries supporting this resolution in order to advance sustainable development.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order to develop the social and solidarity economy on a global scale, it would first be necessary to identify the countries and regions neglected in current projects, in order to establish the foundations of the SSE there. Countries and territories that are already implementing this concept of economy can develop it and promote it to other players, with the aim of spreading the SSE internationally.

To implement and develop the SSE effectively, it is essential to :

- Disseminate the concept in order to encourage people to adopt the principles of the SSE. It is desirable to raise public awareness of the economic and social benefits of this collaborative economy, so that it can be promoted in other regions. If individuals integrate these principles into their daily lives, they are likely to adopt a more responsible lifestyle and thus limit the harmful consequences of the lifestyle practices of a consumer society, for example.
- Provide financial support to the various SSE players, such as companies, cooperatives, mutual societies and NGOs. The French government, for example, declared during the coronavirus period that "a SSE structure carrying out an economic activity and suffering the effects of the health crisis is entitled to the partial activity scheme. Up to 100% of the compensation will be paid. Until 31 December 2020, it can apply for partial activity benefits for one or more employees who are unable to work, when it is faced with a drop in activity or supply difficulties, or even when it is unable to put in place the necessary preventive measures to protect the health of employees".

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- Deepening relationships between partners to create sustainable and active networks. Associations such as the "Restaurants du cœur" and food banks play a major role in day-to-day solidarity. These examples are mainly linked to the fight against poverty, but if this type of association receives more financial support from other companies or organisations and establishes relationships with other associations, networks can be formed. In this way, different NGOs can help each other and even organise joint projects. Indeed, the more such initiatives are encouraged, the more actively the SSE will be developed.
- Support research and development in the SSE in order to develop its implementation. For example, grants could be made available to researchers or they could be exempted from tax or employers' contributions in order to encourage scientific advances in this sector. The creation of research hubs could also play a major role, as researchers from different parts of the world could come together to share their ideas and convictions. This has already been done at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at Saint-Etienne in France. This centre has set up an association to prefigure a junior enterprise in the form of a cooperative. In addition, in 2023 it has committed itself to a European Erasmus programme on the economies of transformation and to the development of a European training course. The SSE and Social Innovation Cluster defends an approach to SSE that is particularly sensitive to the social issues that underpin it: social justice, participatory democracy and social experimentation.

These ideas would lead to the development of SSE throughout the world, and thus strengthen the links of mutual aid and cooperation if the involved people and organisations are equally committed.

### Questions to consider:

1. Is my country implementing SSE, and if so, how, and at what stage of development ?
2. How are companies in my country involved in the SSE ?
3. What concrete solidarity operations has my country put in place internationally ?
4. Are the trade unions in my country involved in SSE programmes ?
5. Is the SSE a relevant model for responding to the most urgent climate and social challenges ?

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→ [Reports of the General Discussion Committee: Decent work and the social and solidarity economy](#)

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- [RepèrESS "International cooperation and solidarity & SSE" | RTES](#)