



Working Paper

**Social and green economies in the Mena region:
through sustainability, public policies and SDGs**

Gianluca PASTORELLI, Anastasia COSTANTINI,
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Gianluca Pastorelli¹, Anastasia Costantini and Samuel Barco Serrano

Diesis Network

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¹ Corresponding author: luca.pastorelli@diesis.coop

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Abstract

This working paper is based both on literature review and interviews to key informants and stakeholders from or active in the region conducted in the framework of various initiatives: research projects, peer-learning activities, support to networks, policy makers and entrepreneurs. These initiatives have been leading us to connect with the SSE ecosystems in the area called “Southern Neighbourhood” in a European (centric?) perspective.

The rationale behind this exercise is an attempt to share a light on the state of play of the public policies and international initiatives bound to support the social and green economies showcasing some examples we consider particularly relevant.

1. A new European policy agenda for the Mediterranean region

The European Neighbourhood Policy sets a “new, ambitious and innovative Agenda for the Mediterranean, drawing for the first time on the full EU toolbox and the ground-breaking opportunities of the twin green and digital transitions, in order to relaunch our cooperation and realise the untapped potential of our shared region”. Moreover, the “perspective of the post COVID-19 recovery offers a rare opportunity for Europe and the Mediterranean region to commit to a common and people-centred agenda and take actions necessary for its implementation.” The new Agenda aims for a green, digital, resilient and just recovery, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. The objectives for the years to come are to build fairer and more prosperous and inclusive societies for the benefit of people, especially youth.

The Joint Communication² highlights the current challenges of the Southern Mediterranean region which “is facing governance, socio-economic, climate, environmental and security challenges, many of which result from global trends and call for joint action by the EU and Southern Neighbourhood partners.” To seize this momentum, the Joint Communication proposes also an “Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours” which will help spur long-term

² JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood A new Agenda for the Mediterranean {SWD(2021) 23 final}.

socio-economic recovery, foster sustainable development, address the region's structural imbalances, and tap into the region's economic potential.

In the new Agenda for the Mediterranean guiding the EU's policy towards the region and the multi-annual programming under the EU's new Neighbourhood³ initiatives there is a strong focus on sustainable economies: "Economic diversification is important, especially for countries that rely heavily on sectors prone to economic shocks. The EU and its partners will work together to benefit from the growth in the green and digital economies, in line with the objectives set by the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) sectoral dialogues. Here social economy is highlighted: "Thanks to its business models that put people and the planet at their core, the social economy holds potential to address many societal challenges and increases our society's resilience in times of crises." Therefore, the action foresees a "mainstreaming support for the social economy in regional and bilateral programmes, including support for developing adequate legal and policy frameworks, strengthening institutional capacity and enabling mutual learning."

Moreover, the Ministerial Declaration of the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on Employment and Labour held in Cascais on 2-3 April 2019, already placed an "unequivocal emphasis on Social Economy, not only as an alternative way of delivering economic, social and environmental value, but also a smart way of unlocking resources, creating sustainable employment, and generating inclusive economic growth in the region. They call for "promoting Social Innovation and creating an enabling environment for Social Enterprises to unleash the full potential of Social and Solidarity Economy," and "acknowledge the role it will play in the context of the work program on UfM Industrial Cooperation and SMEs development."⁴

Green growth has been widely recognised as an essential element in achieving climate mitigation targets refined in the Paris Agreement. The Europe 2020 Strategy has recognised the central role of the transition towards a green, low-carbon and resource-efficient economy in achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

³ JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood A new Agenda for the Mediterranean {SWD(2021) 23 final.

⁴ Social Economy in the MENA Region and the Balkans 5 July 2019 – UfM Secretariat, Barcelona.

Today, the European Green Deal presents a roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and outlines the investments needed and financing tools available and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition, which could also be having spill-over effects on neighbouring Mediterranean countries.

The EC considers that “Social economy is a part of the economy driven primarily by collective interests as well as social and environmental objectives. The EU action plan for the social economy⁵ has been published on the 9th of December 2021: it includes a specific chapter on the “external dimension” and specific measures for the “Southern Neighborhood”. This initiative seeks to boost the contribution of social economy organisations to a fair and sustainable growth. It will enhance social investment, support social economy actors to start up, scale up, innovate and create jobs.

2. Green economy in the Mena Region

While for the EU Mediterranean area the concept of the circular economy seems to be advocated by policymakers and stakeholders, in many countries of the MENA region (e.g., Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Libya), the concept of the green economy is relatively new, and incentives for companies to adopt circular principles are very limited.⁶

Setting a regional example in green growth could, however, turn the MENA economies from being resource-rich to resourceful – knowing how to make use of all their natural capital in the smartest possible ways.

However, fostering green growth in MENA region requires some considerations:⁷

- A structural challenge for many countries remains the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, whether related to waste treatment (illegal dumping or substandard treatment of waste) or chemical pollution of water bodies.

⁵ For more info about the Social Economy Action Plan please visit <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en>

⁶ Karam, A. (2020). Regional Baseline Assessment Region II: Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Libya. SCP/RAC. Switchmed project. www.switchmed.eu/

⁷ Regional Summary of Policy Recommendations to Support the Development of Green and Circular Businesses in the Mediterranean. Switchmed project. www.switchmed.eu

- The countries of the MENA region are characterised by a large informal sector at it is recommended to understand and consider their role in the transition to a green economy to implement approaches that are tailored to their needs.
- Some of the region countries have been or are suffering from political, security and economic instability. Therefore, people and businesses' priorities are focused on their short-term physical and economic security, and customers are price-oriented over environmental protection and sustainability.

The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the Mediterranean is the first intergovernmental agreement in the Mediterranean basin to establish a regional action framework to promote the shift towards a more sustainable and circular economy, consumption patterns with lower environmental footprints, and greener production methods. It is structured around key economic sectors that are the main sources of environmental pressures on Mediterranean ecosystems.

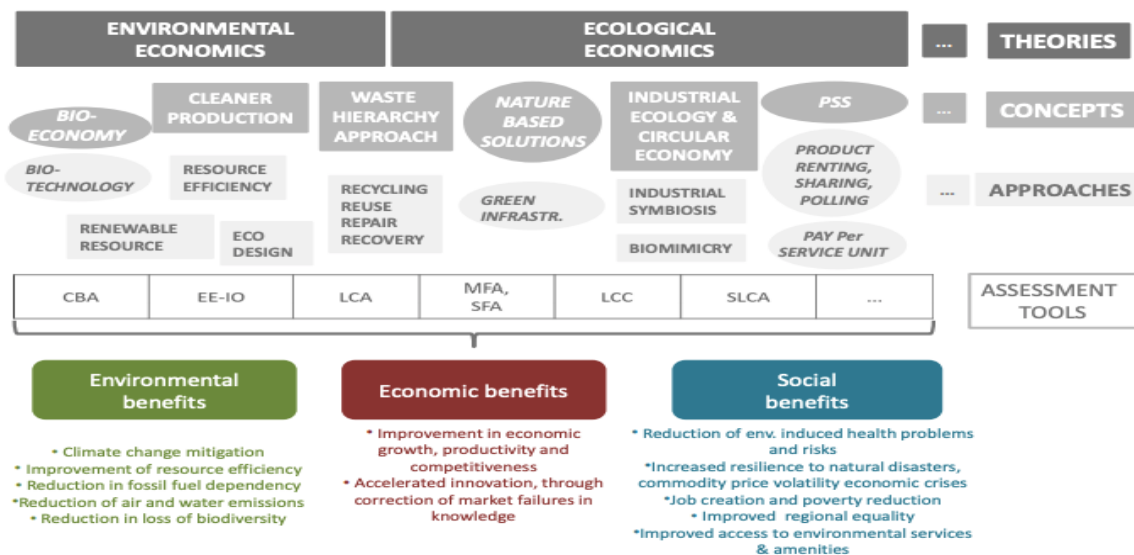
Regional policy measures to support green and circular economy businesses should be implemented. These businesses are acknowledged by the countries of the Barcelona Convention as key drivers for the Green and Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region. While all businesses must adapt to their political, social and economic context and operate within regulatory and institutional constraints, green and circular economy businesses often face additional challenges such as establishing a secure foothold in the market, staying competitive with other businesses that do not internalize the costs of environmental and social responsibility, limited opportunities for building capacity on sustainable business practices, and access to financing. Additional challenges can arise when the markets for sustainable products are influenced by a heterogeneous framework of policies affecting business creation and development, especially in a regional setting like the Mediterranean.

Still, awareness around climate change and environmental issues is rising, especially among the new generations, driven by civil society organizations. At the same time, all countries are now struggling with the recent economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 crisis, exacerbated by climate change. The crisis should therefore be seen as an opportunity to reshape and redesign our resource-intensive, linear economy towards a green circular economy.

Green Social Entrepreneurs:

As stated by Zahedi and Otterpohl (2016)⁸ a green social entrepreneur could play two important roles in sustainable development: first as an innovative community to change the structure of the economy through sustainability and second as a community which creates and changes the norms in a society so as to maintain sustainable development. In fact, green social entrepreneurs do not focus only on the most immediate problems, but also seek to understand the context to develop new resources and make them available to influence global society.

Figure 1. Characterization of different kinds of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship



Source: Schaltegger S. & Wagner M., 2011

From our observations and direct experience in the region, social and green entrepreneurship are very often connected and mixed in innovative businesses looking for creating positive impact in the societies and the local communities. In this lively and challenging scenario, where we are observing fast growing and promising social and green economy experiences.

3. A regional overview of the SSE ecosystems

According to the Union for the Mediterranean, Social Economy is *both the agent and the instrument of inclusive and responsible growth in the UfM Region* and

⁸ Zahedi, A. & Otterpohl, R. (2016), Towards sustainable development by creation of green social entrepreneur's communities, 12th Global conference on sustainable manufacturing.

we should take into account the heterogeneity of the Euro-Mediterranean region in terms of enabling environments and business cultures. “The potential for job creation through Social Economy remains to be largely unexplored in comparison to other regions, which presents an opportunity and poses question marks about the optimal path ahead in order to unleash the potential of a significant private sector player with more than 3.2 million enterprises and 15 million jobs.”⁹

We can observe different levels of growth and maturity in the national ecosystems: in Tunisia, the first country in the MENA region, a law on Social Economy has recently been approved after a draft framework law on SSE was formulated and supported by a tripartite process with ILO assistance. The Kingdom of Morocco is an extremely interesting country to study as it recently put in place a “Stratégie 2010-2020 pour la promotion de l’économie sociale et solidaire” and a “Nouvelle stratégie de l’ESS 2020-2030” connected to the SDGs has been recently launched. Other countries are in earlier stage but still developing support structures. Moreover, various flagship initiatives from international organisations (European Commission, ILO, OECD, UNIDO, national agencies supporting development cooperation, World Bank...) are supporting social and green economies in the region addressing ecosystems, policy makers, social entrepreneurs and their support organisations (*a table of this kind of support initiatives is presented as an annex*).

Social economy, including social enterprises, is unevenly developed across the Mediterranean area. We find some countries with more developed social entrepreneurship sectors and other with very little presence. In the former we count countries such as Morocco where the numbers are very significant with more than 170.000 associations (albeit with a limited economic impact of around 1%), over 20.000 cooperatives (2600 of which are made of 100% women) with a joint share of the GDP of 2% and almost no figures for other types of Social Enterprises (which is a constant in all research and mapping on Social Enterprises: absence of number for other than cooperatives and associations). In the latter we can include Lebanon, where despite having an important number of coops (almost 2000) they struggle to build bridges with SE initiatives.

In most of the cases there is no data about Social Economy at national level. This is a general feature for the whole region since statistics for Social Economy is one of the main gaps in ecosystems in early and even medium-term stages of development.

⁹ Social Economy in the MENA Region and the Balkans 5 July 2019 – UfM Secretariat, Barcelona.

3.1. Morocco

Morocco presents one of the most developed ecosystems from the point of view of Social Economy in SEM. It is estimated that the SSE sector in Morocco contributes 3% to the GDP and may sustain nearly 600,000 self-employment jobs. However, salaried employment remains difficult to measure as most of the SSE businesses are precarious and operate in informal markets. Most of the cooperatives – be it agricultural (65% of total SSE businesses) or handcraft – act by imitations with no product differentiation resulting on very limited commercialization opportunities.

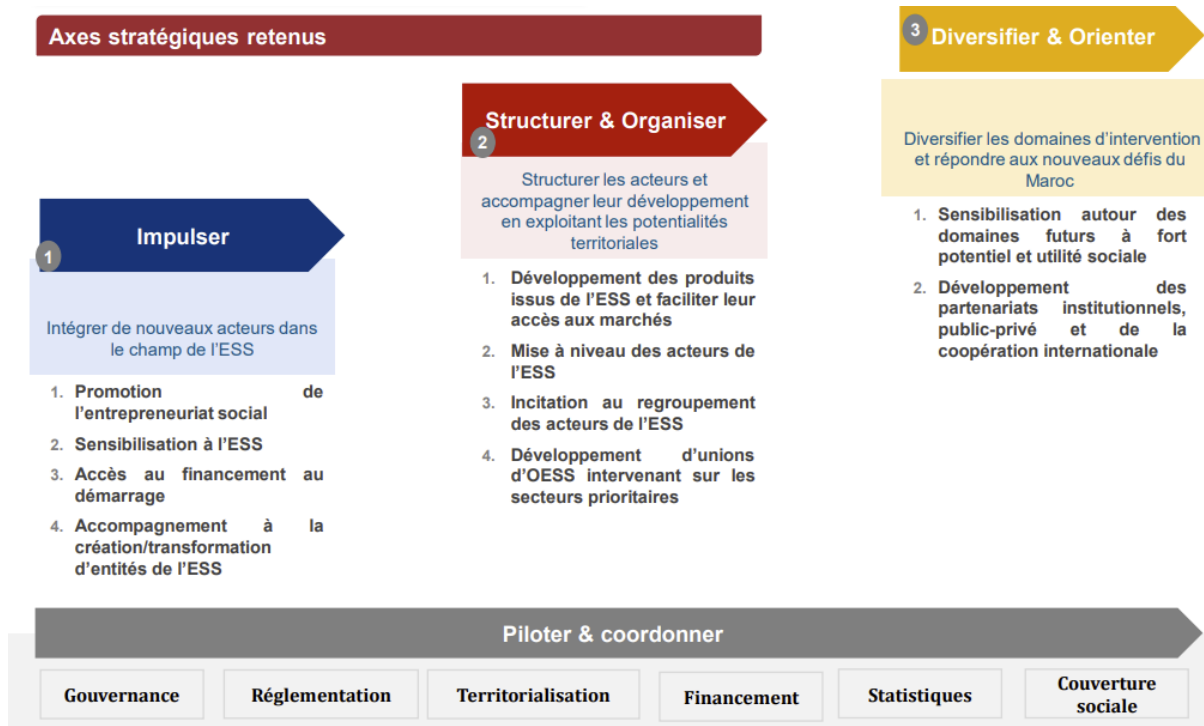
A key player in the country is the Moroccan Network of Social and Solidarity Economy (REMESS), a national network of 55 organizations involved in the field of social economy: NGOs, mutual associations, cooperatives, economic interest groups but also researchers and experts in SSE. The network is present throughout the country with 12 branches and operates in close contact with local economic players. REMESS is also an active member of SSE promoting international initiatives such as the African SSE Network or the Mediterranean SSE Network (ESmed).

REMESS' work aims to promote SSE as a leverage for the development of territories in Morocco focusing its intervention on two levels: an advocacy level to public authorities and capacity building activities for SSE.

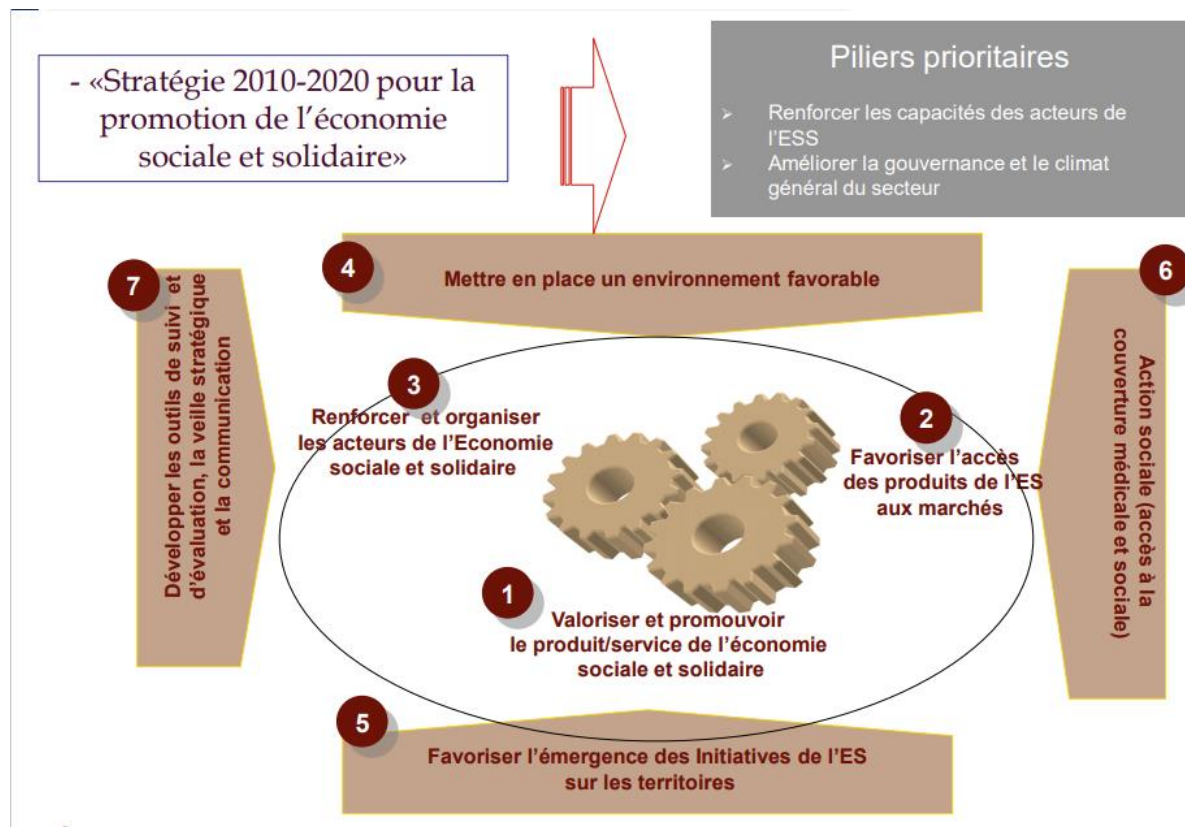
In Morocco initiatives led by public authorities such as the National Initiative for Human Development in its various editions have certainly had a positive effect in boosting the commercial perspectives of cooperatives but show limited in scope. The recently implemented "New Generation Cooperative" initiative led by the Ministry of Agriculture aims to upgrade/create 12,000 innovative cooperatives operating in promising value chains to overcome the market saturation and “modernize” the cooperative sector in Morocco.

The Kingdom of Morocco had put in place a “Stratégie 2010-2020 pour la promotion de l'économie sociale et solidaire” (Strategy for the promotion of the SSE), accompanied by a 2016-2021 plan for "strengthening the social economy and contribution to the fight against poverty and exclusion" through the strengthening and organisation of the sector, creation of a favourable climate and the valorisation of products. Last year a “Nouvelle stratégie de l'ESS 2020-2030” (New SSE strategy) connected to the SDGs has been launched whose elements are exposed below. The strategy targets the pillars linked to a sustainable and inclusive economy approach: social cohesion, green/sustainable, employment, digital transformation, proximity.

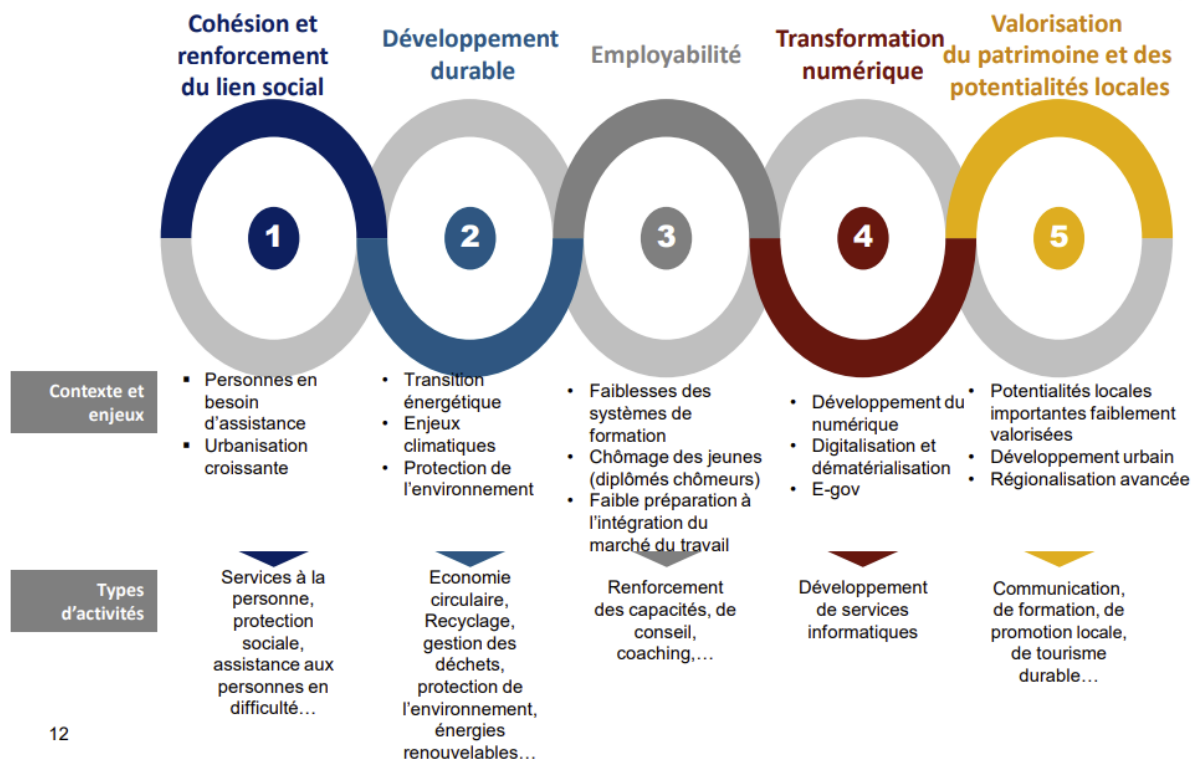
It revolves around three “strategic axes” we could define as: promotion/impulse, structuring/organizing, diversification and guidance.



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Social Economy, CEPES 14 Décembre 2020)



Nouveaux défis du Maroc appellent l'ESS à jouer un rôle central

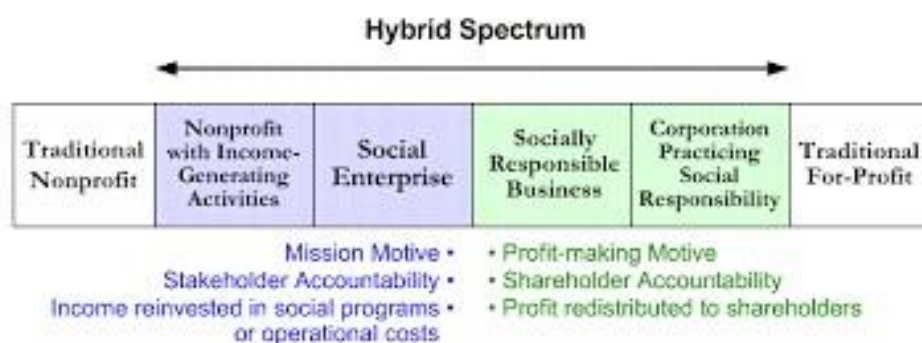


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3.2. Jordan

Regarding **Jordan**, Social economy and social entrepreneurship are developing on different tracks, sometimes parallel or separate, nevertheless through the years the ecosystem is taking shape.

The various known Social Economy approaches, and targets are present in Jordan: work integration, inclusion of vulnerable groups, social services and more *modern* social enterprises looking at Green opportunities, but also Cooperatives.



(source: JoinUP country report)

As per MedUP! country study, “No mainstream institutions currently have dedicated capacity or long-term sustainable programmes to support and enhance social entrepreneurship in Jordan. Significant opportunities exist to build a coalition across a highly diverse set of institutions to support both individual and collective efforts to maximize the impact of social entrepreneurship in Jordan. This is reflected in our recommendations for creating a Social Enterprise Jordan Membership body, but also in the general approach behind many of our macro, meso and micro recommendations that deserve to be powered by multi-sector actors and partnerships, to maximise their impact and sustainability.”

Social enterprises in Jordan face both challenges and opportunities arising from the lack of clear juridical framework and there are (not yet?) specific legal entity types that fits to the needs of social enterprises, leaving them stranded between the social development and business worlds.

The cooperative sector was once considered one of the most important economic sectors in the country but today, as the International Cooperative Alliance study shows “the cooperative sector in Jordan is currently in tatters with its great potential largely untapped. According to figures provided by the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC), there are 1,591 cooperatives registered with the agency, two thirds of which are active, with the overall membership base comprising 142,000 citizens. Of these, only 14 per cent are women. The value of total assets is JD327 million, while the available cash at hand stands only at JD42 million.”

3.3. Lebanon

In **Lebanon**, socio-economic growth is hindered by a high level of public debt (representing 150% of national GDP)¹⁰ as well as weak infrastructure. Since the outbreak of the Syrian war, financial, economic, social and cultural problems have increased with more than 1.5 million refugees seeking safety in Lebanon.

Social entrepreneurship is an old practice in the country. As a result of local culture of solidarity and needs, most municipalities are home to agricultural and women cooperatives, mutual insurance funds and sustainable associations to support the underprivileged within a society, all of which could serve as models for social entrepreneurship in the country. In 2010, Beyond Reform and Development “launched for the first time a series of conversations around Social Entrepreneurship in Lebanon through panels, forums and workshops, aiming

¹⁰ Government of France. *Economic Conference for Development through Reforms with the Private Sector*. Join Statement. 6 Apr. 2016.

to push Social Entrepreneurship on the agenda of stakeholders (state and non-state) as a tool to engage citizens in finding innovative solutions”.

Since 2017, more social entrepreneurship projects have been supported by international agencies including UNDP, USAID, the EU and DFID. The drawback with this type of programs is their sustainability as they have, most of the time, short life span and performance indicators that are not necessarily fit to social enterprises life cycle. It is only recently that some INGOs started developing long term programs building on lessons from the few experiences piloted recently to grow the social entrepreneurship ecosystem such as OXFAM, Mercy Corps and UNICEF. (Source: MedUP! country report).

Cooperatives in Lebanon are essentially active in the agricultural and agro-food sectors with a first law enacted in 1964 and further amended in 1972, 1977, and 1983. It defines cooperatives as non-profit organizations whose objective is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of their members through cooperation between them towards a common objective.¹¹ as pointed out by the ICA: “the ultimate challenge is in enforcing the law of cooperatives. Another big challenge is in convincing the people to work together as a group and in joining their efforts in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. In addition, eliminating the idea of continuous financial support is essential and this should be substituted by self-dependency to ensure sustainability of the cooperative enterprise. (...) The cooperative sector should be broader than the Ministry of Agriculture it should have an entity by itself to focus on all types of cooperation and issue specific laws to enhance and improve the cooperative activities and make it more friendly”.

At the time of writing this report the ecosystem is vivid and full of initiatives: worth mentioning the attempt of consolidating a common national platform: the Association Lebanese Social Enterprises created by a group of social enterprises “who are strongly committed to connect social enterprises in one association, organize the sector and Connect LSE with local and international partners. We have joined forces to build an effective structure capable of catering to the growing needs of social enterprises in Lebanon. The association’s mission is to support the affiliated social enterprises by contributing to their administrative and financial development and to increase their social and environmental impact by all possible means.”

¹¹ ILO and ICA have published extensive surveys/analysis of the sector – e.g. The Cooperative Sector in Lebanon: What Role? What Future? / International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Arab States. - Beirut: ILO, 2018.

At the present time there is no policy or legal framework for social enterprises in Lebanon yet, based on a study conducted few years ago three hundred social enterprises were identified by stakeholders, a set of parameters was compiled covering three dimensions: the social outcome intended by social enterprises, the governance structure of the social enterprise, and the agency of the social entrepreneur (or the group) that is driving it.

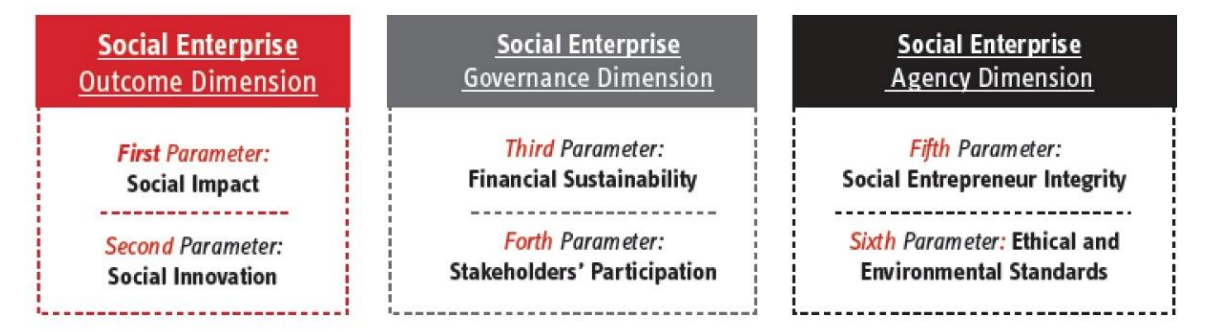


Figure 1: The three dimensions of a Social Enterprise. Source: *Beyond Reform and Development. The Social Entrepreneurship Momentum – A Solution Brief*. Beirut. 2016.

3.4. Tunisia

Tunisia represents a major example for all the region in terms of SSE development especially for the bill on social and solidarity economy (SSE) adopted on 17 June 2020 by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People in Tunisia. The new law aims to balance economic growth and social equity by promoting equitable co-existence of the public, private and the social economy institutions. It is presented in the next chapter and shines as an example of cooperation and support by national and international public policie(s) maker(s). The bill is the apex of a process started some years before and involving various public and private bodies: social and solidarity economy is considered to be the third pillar of the Tunisian economy, in a social contract signed in 2013 by the government, the Tunisian General Workers Union (UGTT) and the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts (UTICA). SSE is viewed as the pillar that can fill the gaps in public service provision and that can promote economic activity and investment in the interior regions. The UNDP Strategic Study on SSE in Tunisia (UNDP, 2016) provided the first diagnostics of the sector and its development perspectives a fragmented and heterogeneous enterprises responding to different economic business models and objectives. Support for the SSE was reiterated in the Tunisian five-year Development Plan for 2016–2020. In the Plan it is indicated that employment in the SSE sector should rise

from 0,5% to 1,5% of the active population in 2020. The Government thus would support the creation of enterprises in the SSE, green and tech sectors. However, by the end of 2018, the SSE contributed 1% to GDP and employment and was viewed to be stagnating.¹²

4. A look at some of the most relevant initiatives supporting social and green economies

In this section some of the most relevant initiatives supported by public international donors are presented; a more comprehensive list is present as an annex.

4.1. EU - UNIDO | SwitchMed - Enabling the Switch to resource-efficient and circular economies in the Southern Mediterranean -> Switcher Funds

This flagship and renewed regional initiative supports eight countries in the Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia) in achieving sustainable, productive and circular economies. Since 2013, SwitchMed has under the lead of UNIDO, in cooperation with the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production of UNEP-MAP (SCP/RAC), and the UN Environment's Economy Division, demonstrated the potential of SME's, green entrepreneurs, organizations from the civil society and policymakers to drive a green and sustainable economic development.

In order to face the challenge of improving access to finance for Green Entrepreneurs, the programme has focused on creating opportunities for Green Entrepreneurs ("The Switchers") to show the potential of their business ideas and attract the interest of investors.

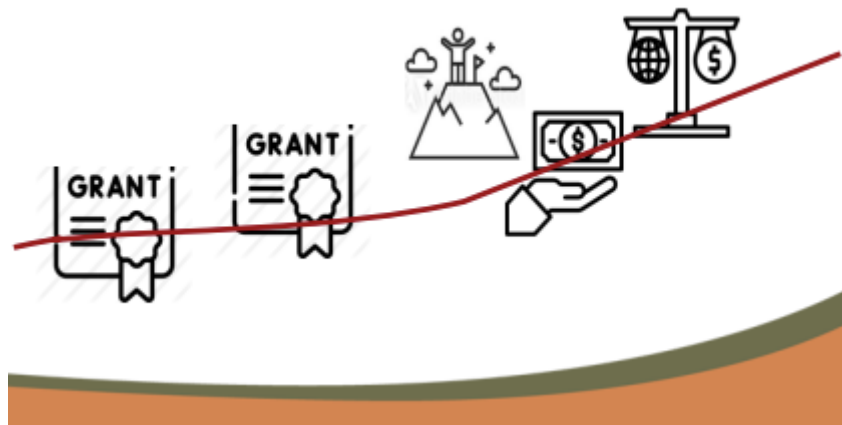
Matching financing needs with the available financing instruments may be a challenge in Mediterranean countries. The risk and return expectations of investors and investees do not often align. Moreover, there is a lack of patient capital or flexible finance that fits the needs of Green Entrepreneurs. In certain cases, Green Entrepreneurs who do find finance, do so under conditions that they cannot easily accept.

¹² MedUP! Country report – Tunisia (2019).

Mission of the SwitchersFund is to facilitate investments directly to the Switchers, through a mix of grants, impact investing and technical assistance, as a way of strengthening their start-up projects and a stepping-stone towards raising additional funds in their countries. The SwitchersFund has three main goals:

- 1) Proving that finance for sustainable business can work (2017-2020)*
- 2) Filling the financing and technical assistance gaps for sustainable business (2021- 2023)*
- 3) Networking with all the relevant stakeholders and support policy-making (2021- 2023)*

Beyond its Grant Scheme, the SwitchersFund intends to develop other financial instruments such as recoverable grants, honor loans and ultimately minority equity participations. **The basic idea is that Green Startups can progressively graduate from one instrument to the next until they become investment ready.**



The goal of the SwitchersFund is to act as a catalyzer that ultimately serves to attract private investment towards Green Startups.

Currently the action is in the scaling-up phase when The SwitchersFund is as tool to attract investment (2,4 Meuro) for the Switchers and then is expected to become an established mechanisms to funnel Impact Investments.

4.2. ILO | Promotion of Organizations and Mechanisms of Social and Solidarity Economy ('PROMESS') in Tunisia

The project has upscaled and replicated a successful rural youth employment initiative implemented under the DEPART project (Dutch funded project on LED) and made its expertise, strategies and tools available to other development projects promoting SSE organizations and mechanisms in Tunisia.

The project supported more than 200 SSE organizations per governorate and create not less than 4,000 jobs and livelihoods.

The main objective is the creation of sustainable and decent jobs for young women and men in Tunisia through the promotion of organizations and mechanisms of the social and solidarity economy.

Particularly relevant to the purposes of our study is the component of the project devoted to the **development of the legal and institutional framework favoring the emergence and structuring of the SSE.**

This component focused on the establishment of a legal framework and the elaboration of a bill: the establishment of the legal framework for the SSE started with a national dialogue between the tripartite constituents and the participatory approach introduced by the ILO has facilitated the involvement of all stakeholders, **including SSE actors.**

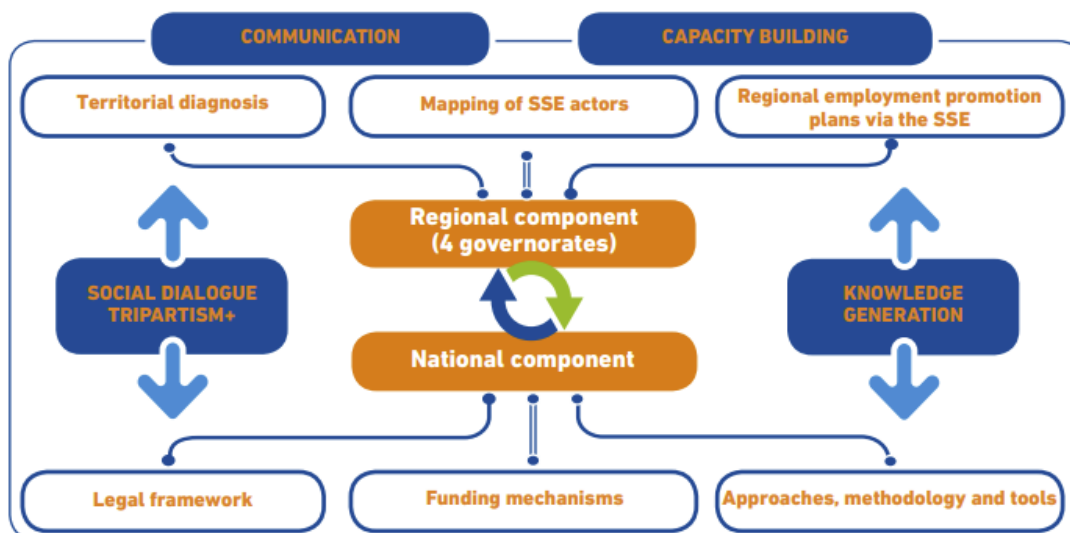
The SSE bill was based on the analysis and compilation of the legal texts in force as well as national reference documents.

The bill on social and solidarity economy (SSE) was adopted on 17 June 2020 by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People in Tunisia. The new law aims to balance economic growth and social equity by promoting equitable co-existence of the public, private and the social economy institutions. It also aims to promote economic and social inclusion of the disadvantaged and marginalized populations including those living in isolated, rural areas and unemployed youth by encouraging them to associate in cooperatives, mutual organizations or self-help groups that can help improve livelihoods and create jobs.

Goals



Intervention strategy



■ 1 Development of the legal and institutional framework favoring the emergence and structuring of the SSE

Establishment of a legal framework Elaboration of a bill

- The establishment of the legal framework for the SSE started with a national dialogue between the tripartite constituents
- The participatory approach introduced by the BIT has facilitated the involvement of all stakeholders, including SSE actors
- The SSE bill was based on the analysis and compilation of the legal texts in force as well as national reference documents.
- A comparative study (benchmarking) on the main experiences at international level in the development of SSE laws as well as the tripartite consultation workshop resulted in a better version of the law.
- The public consultation through the portal of the presidency of the government has enabled other actors, in particular civil society, to react and make comments on the various articles and chapters of this law.
- A communication campaign was carried out to support public consultation of the bill.
- The SSE bill was adopted by the ministerial council



Communication, awareness and popularization

Goals :

- Popularize the concepts related to SSE
- Disseminate the principles and values of the SSE
- Adhere the institutional and social partners, as well as the general public and the components of civil society to the ongoing dynamic on the SSE.

Over a hundred SSE awareness and training actions have been carried out targeting:

- Local structures
- Associations
- Young people
- Beneficiaries of the challenge fund

The communication campaign took place on public channels and radios as well as on social networks.



4.3. MADAD FUNDS - SEE CHANGE

SEE Change is a joint action led by three key actors of the Lebanese SE ecosystem: Oxfam, COSV and Beyond Reform and Development – BRD. This action is focused on SE as a tool to support local development and enhance social stability. Its overall objective is to strengthen SE to respond to the social and economic situation in three areas of the country: Bekaa, North, and Mount Lebanon.

It builds on four previous projects/actions which involved the above mentioned three actors: al Mashghal, FURSA, BADAEL and MEDUD. It addresses the same

three level as MedUp! (MICRO for Social Enterprises, MESO for support organisations and MACRO for policy).

Maybe the most innovative action is the one led by COSV at micro level. It is aimed at testing an innovative bottom-up approach where a pluralism of forms of SEs are supported in the development of a social justice incubation program for new models of social start-ups. Thus, the project intends to co-build a local approach to Social Economy which serves the objective of an endogenous development within the broader theoretical and practical framework of Social Justice.

Besides this, other foreseen activities are:

- MICRO: to equip existing SEs with strengthened skills and financial support and to provide financial and non-financial support to SEs.
- MESO: to provide capacity development support to SESOs and to strengthen the networking and knowledge exchange between SESO through online and offline approaches.
- MACRO: to support the development of a common advocacy strategy to promote for SE in Lebanon, to support the existing networks working on SE, to provide capacity development support to potential members of a SE office/unit and to support the implementation of advocacy actions.

Moreover, the above-mentioned innovative initiative, it is also worth highlighting the effort to integrate actors and initiative at local level.

4.4. EU - MedUP! Promoting social entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region (2018-2022)

MedUP! is the flagship project for the European Commission to support Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy in the region.

Global objective is to promote an enabling environment in the Southern Mediterranean partner countries for the development of the social entrepreneurship sector as a driver for inclusive growth and job creation.

Specific objective is to increase economic inclusiveness and employment in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine where adequate policies on social entrepreneurship are in place, public-private dialogue and exchanges of practices are promoted and high quality services for social enterprises are provided.

The project, led by Oxfam Italia, aims to increase economic inclusiveness and employment supporting Social Enterprises at micro, meso and macro levels in MENA countries as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Occupied Palestinian Territories. The 4 years' project is implementing advocacy for adequate policies on social entrepreneurship, public-private dialogue, exchanges of practices and high quality services for social enterprises.

The project strategy operates at three levels:

At Macro Level: Promoting country and cross-country policy and advocacy initiatives and public-private dialogue to create an enabling regulatory and policy environments

At Meso Level: Reinforcing 60 social entrepreneurship support organizations through capacity-building and networking activities

At Micro Level: Providing financial and technical support to 100 social enterprises.

4.5. EU – JoinUP! Creating an inclusive, more connected and better resourced social entrepreneurship eco-system in Jordan

The action aims to improve the conditions for the development of Social Entrepreneurship as a driver for economic and social inclusion in Jordan and to stimulate social entrepreneurship development as an innovative model to address persistent problems of poverty and inequality by harnessing their potential to create income opportunities in both urban and rural areas.

The Action designed and set-up a sub-granting scheme to fund established SEs with a high potential for driving development, inclusive job creation, social innovation and women's economic empowerment, working in the list of identified sectors, as per the call guidelines. The total amount available for sub-granting is 1.2 M EUR. The total budget of the project is 2.750.000 EUR.

Another interesting part of the action is related to the support for creating a meso level platform – social economy support /representative platform. One of the most interesting elements is their evolution from a narrower approach addressing mostly Social Enterprises and a very limited focus on Cooperatives for example, the project has evolved to embrace a more inclusive approach where Social Economy offers a suitable framework for Jordan. Thus, for example, it launched a Call for Tenders with the title "Call for bids: JOinUP! Opportunities to Realize the Social Economy in Jordan". It was aimed at analyzing the existing social economy in Jordan, as well as opportunities for expansion and

it specifically mentioned Cooperatives and other types of Social Economy organisations as their target.

Finally, despite not having policy as a target (it only addresses Social Enterprises and Support Organisations), it has also realized that a key dimension for both is their role in the policy process. In this sense, the support in the creation of a network and of a national forum is key in increasing the capabilities of the ecosystem in producing friendlier policy frameworks.

5. Some cross-country observations

A solid and thorough analysis would require much more time and resources; however, we can resume some major issues:

- We observe in the region an uneven development regarding Social Economy and Social Business laws. Thus, we see as in some countries (Morocco, Tunisia and, to a certain extent, Palestine) a more general Social Economy approach is being considered and has entered the policy process (not in Palestine, though), while in others, such as Lebanon and Jordan, we find some initiatives to develop at least a Social Business law. Egypt, seems to be closer to these two other Mashrik countries, while in Algeria remains outside these initiatives.
- There are positive trends at regional level in relation to law reforms with some already implemented (Tunisia) and other accelerating (Morocco, where the initiative had been in place for several years, is now preparing a new draft) examples. In line with the above-mentioned development, we find that only one country has succeeded in passing a Law (Tunisia on Social and Solidarity Economy) but it required the combined efforts of key international actors (ILO and the EU mainly but also other such as Italy and France) and the strong support of a key local actor such as the local Trade Union (UGTT). Meanwhile, the initiative to design and pass a Law on Social Economy in Morocco had encountered some problems. Thus, it had not advanced for some year now, despite the existence of a project of framework law sent to the General Secretariat of the Government in 2016 and it being included in the government programme of 2017. Nowadays, with the support of an AfD's funded programme, there is a new Bill being drafted.
- Initiatives regarding Social Business laws are ongoing in Jordan and Lebanon. This and the previous issue seem to depict two intra-regional trends: one closer to a more general Social Economy approach (Maghreb) and one closer

to a more specific focus on one type of Social Economy enterprise (Mashriq). In this case we see a more advanced situation in Lebanon and some more initial developments in Jordan. Nevertheless, we also see some interest to move towards a more general Social Economy approach regarding policy and legislative initiatives in Jordan in the last year and a half (led by JoinUP, MedUP and Mubaderoon projects). Palestine is also moving (see below regarding cooperatives) with Egypt in a more initial situation with no sufficient advocacy capabilities supporting any reform. Finally, Algeria seems to remain outside these two trends.

- Relevant gaps emerge in relation to Green Economy regarding definition in terms of Green companies and how to differentiate between ESG/Sustainability approaches and fully impact ones (the same applies to SE) from the point of view of legislation/policy. Social Economy has evolved and found a clear niche in relation to “types” of enterprises resulting in a clear legislative path when it comes to developing a distinctive policy/legal framework. On the other side, the same cannot be said in relation Green Economy companies. Therefore, a legal framework assessment tends to require an extra effort in delimiting the relevant pieces of legislation. Furthermore, when we consider the goal of some initiatives sponsoring Impact investment, we find that the proposed definition of this type of investment imposes further constraints to assess the regional or country level ecosystem from the point of view of legislation/policies (partly due to the purposive vagueness of the proposed definition). Nevertheless, traditional Social Economy and Social Business laws tend to include environment and/or sustainability as suitable objectives to qualify so to a certain extent SE can consider to include many Green Economy companies (if not most of them). Something different is environmental regulations which may be making their way in some countries but due to insufficient supervisory capabilities there is much room for improvement.
- There is a key issue regarding modernization of cooperative laws (and the potential for other laws regarding associations, mutuals and foundations). Cooperatives present a similar problem to that faced by these key actors in Eastern Europe. They were heavily promoted in many countries around the world in the 50’, 60’ and 70’ and in many cases, they also suffered a high degree of intervention by public authorities. Since then, the legal framework has either left unchanged or reformed to make it more marginal (Tunisia made some changes so that even the name cooperative was erased). However, as recent efforts in some countries such as Morocco (new Law 12-112 passed on 2014) have shown, this actor can be a key element in addressing many of the most relevant issues. We also see examples where key stakeholders consider that a more modern legal and policy framework

could address some of the barriers encountered (informality, size of the tickets, sustainability of investments, etc.). In relation to this it is interesting to mention the Coops4dev project managed by the ICA and funded by DEVCO. It has a focus on policy frameworks and it has produced some interesting analysis for some of the countries involved in the study (such as Jordan) which point in the right direction. This, along with the involvement of the Coop Unit from ILO (the same one involved in Tunisia's PROMESS project), is an encouraging development. Finally, it is worth noting that most of the countries are presenting incredibly old legal frameworks and often lacking homogeneity (as for example Egypt with a general Law from 1956, and several on specific types with the last dating back to 1990 on educational cooperatives). The two exceptions are Morocco and Palestine.

- In line with this, Islamic finance market suffers of an inadequate regulatory environment. Some countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and ongoing initiatives in Tunisia) have enacted specific legal framework related to some Islamic-compliant products but the results are yet to come.
- Informality poses a problem which may be linked to regulatory/registration barriers. Informality is high in the region and this affect many issues such as the deal flow, sustainability of social enterprises, impact, access to finance, investment readiness, etc. This can be related to regulatory and registration barriers, since many of these informal undertakings are either not interested/not able to become formal despite having the potential to do so. This is not to say that all informal undertakings should be formalized, since Survivalist Entrepreneurship does play a role in income and informal employment generation. However, it can be expected that some of these informal enterprises do have the potential to provide better quality employment and income if adequately formalized. One example for this would be regulations facilitating the clustering of micro-entrepreneurs into cooperative-like enterprises.
- Policy Dialogue from the EU may be a relevant source of development. The EU activity in the countries has a very interesting and untapped capacity: its capacity to include SE and GE into policy dialogue. In the first case, only Tunisia presents a clear and significant action in this direction with the Budget Support programme recently implemented (ARFIFES) see below. However, for this to be further developed other EU Delegations need to be further acquainted with SSE and the potential of strengthening the collaboration also at this level with other more "politically" charged tools such as the above mentioned one. Third party interventions such as MedUP! Project are less capable of achieving rapid changes but they will certainly benefit from other initiatives at this level.

ANNEX: Table of most relevant initiatives supporting Social Economy in the MENA region

Initiative	Funding institution	Geographic scope	Period	Amount
MEDUP	EU	Regional	2019-2022	5.46 M€
MEDTOWN	EU (ENICBCMED)	Regional	2020-2022	3.4 M€
Mubaderoon for social change	EU	Jordan	2020-2022	2.5 M€
JOINUP	EU	Jordan	2020-2022	2.5 M€
Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (SEE) Change	EU MADAD	Lebanon	2020-2023	7.5 M€
Strengthening Social Entrepreneurship for Migration & Development (SEMD)	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	Lebanon	2021-2023	
Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)	Impact Rise	Lebanon		
Danish Arab Partnership Program and Youth Participation and Employment Program	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Of Denmark	Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan		4 M€
Beirut explosion Emergency response,	GAC, Humanitarian Coalition, and public appeal	Lebanon	Oct2020-Sep2021	CAD 1,242,961
Partnership Agreement with the ICA	EU (DEVCO)	Regional (beyond MENA)	2016-2021	10 M€
Entrepreneuriat pour le développement	UNDP (Norway)	Tunisia		\$US 5 178 600
PROAGRO - Appui au développement des microentreprises agroalimentaires durables et création d'opportunités d'emplois dans des zones défavorisées de la Tunisie	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation	Tunisia	2019-2022	1.8 M€

SELMA - Soutien à l'agriculture locale, à la micro-entreprise et à l'autonomisation des femmes et des jeunes en Tunisie	Cooperazione italiana allo sviluppo	Tunisia	2019-2021	1.3 M€
Agriculture durable et compétitive	Cooperazione italiana allo sviluppo	Tunisia	2017-2020	1.5 M€
RESTART - Promouvoir le développement économique durable et inclusif par le soutien à l'entrepreneuriat juvénile en Tunisie	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation	Tunisia	2019-2022	1.8 M€
PRASOC - Programme d'appui au secteur privé et à l'inclusion financière dans les secteurs de l'agriculture et de l'économie sociale et solidaire	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation	Tunisia	2020-2025	57 M€
Direct support to Microfinance institutions (grants, equity, credit line)	AFD/Proparco	Tunisia	2013-2021	39 M€
ARIZ risk-sharing mechanism for TPME finance and microfinance institutions	AFD	Regional (beyond MENA)	Since 2007	Not specified
Direct support to microfinance institutions (Enda Tamweel)	African Local Currency Bond – ALCB Fund	Tunisia	2021	\$US 10.9 M
JEUN'ESS, PAJ'ESS, and FORTER'ESS. The three projects are decentralized and administratively managed by ILO Office in Algiers with technical backstopping from ILO COOP	ILO	Tunisia		
PROSPECTS: In Lebanon and Jordan, the work of the Unit relates to technical backstopping of the cooperative component of the PROSPECTS project while in Palestine it's done through a cooperative support programme funded by the Italian Government.	ILO+ Italian Agency for Development Cooperation + Implemented by: International Finance Corporation, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Bank)	Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine (Global, Uganda, Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Iraq)	2019-2023	94 M€

PRO-AGRO: some interventions more on cooperative development as part of the 'Promotion of Decent Work in Agribusiness' project in the fruits value chain. We are only at the early stage of the development of the cooperative component. Kindly note that ProAgro has a bigger focus than cooperative development which is only one of its various components.	ILO The project is designed under the framework of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's (BMZ) Special Initiative on Training and Job Creation	Morocco		
ACCEL Africa	ILO	Egypt		
Social Innovation project funded by Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in partnership with Palestine Polytechnic University, Milano Municipality, Consorzio Gino Mattarelli (CGM) and Agility Management and Financial Consulting. It is implemented by ActionAid.	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	Palestine		
Be the impact: the cooperative system and social entrepreneurship as vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	Palestine		The financial composition foresees a budget support component to CWA (365.000 euro) and a call for proposal (Affidato) for CSOs activities (1,038,000 euro) and a multi-bilateral support to the International Labour Organization (1,500,000 euro).
let's Start Up: Inclusive E-Self Employment project	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	Palestine	2016-2020	1,2 M€

COVID-19 Fund_AID_010927: Let's Start Up: Inclusive business e self-employment for People with disabilities and mother of people with disabilities	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	Palestine	2020	49k €
Land and Rights – Paths to Social and Solidarity Economy in Palestine	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	Palestine	2019-2020	
MoreThanAJob: Memorandum of Understanding with the Social Solidarity Economy actors in Palestine	European Union through the European Neighbourhood Instrument of Cross Border Cooperation	Palestine	2019-2022	2 M€
BuildPalestine	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Paltel Group Foundation; a Palestinian Corporate	Palestine		

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Université de Liège | Quartier Agora | Place des Orateurs 1 | Bâtiment B33 -
boîte 6 | BE-4000 Liège (Belgium) | T +32 (0)4 366 27 46 | F +32 (0)4 366 29 58
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