



LOOKING UP – A training path from experiences of local development towards European Social Solidarity Economy strategie

Small-scale partnerships in adult education
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LOOKING UP – A training path from experiences of local development towards European Social Solidarity Economy strategies – is a project under the Erasmus+ programme that aims to give relevance to the economic, social, cultural and capability heritage of the networks and territorial organizations of Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) in the framework of the European strategy of participatory and multi-level local development.

Target

This project is addressed to activists, volunteers, workers of small organisations working in community places, organisations, associations, cooperatives, and Local Action Groups... to all the experiences of Social Solidarity Economy, rooted in rural or urban areas, that are promoting involvement, active participation and civic engagement of citizens and communities: they can show more directly the transformative impact of actions in the daily lives of people and territories and activate a cultural change that has a positive social and economic impact.

Our goals

- Improving skills, awareness, civic engagement of small organisations in the framework of ecological transition and Social Solidarity Economy (SSE);
- Increasing the awareness of small organisations about local and Eu level strategies and policies guiding development actions, enhancing their capacity to look up and know what's happens around them for a bottom-up participation and an improved effectiveness in their own contexts;
- Strengthening transnational networks among organisations working in similar fields, enhancing common approach, and implementing the cooperation in future project.

How

We want to co-design a training path in a peer-to-peer logic in order to guarantee the active role of the target group: the participants will be able to know similar experiences in other EU countries, looking at them as good practices, but also as case studies to be analysed in order to really gather strengths/weaknesses. Sharing a common theoretical basis could also lead to future EU projects, strengthening the possibility of these small organisations to work in international networks.



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Activities

- A co-designed workshop in Florence (June 2024)
- 9 online sessions (between October 2024 – May 2025):
 - 3 sessions about local participatory development and ecological transition,
 - 3 sessions about urban-rural relations through food and its supply chains,
 - 3 sessions about networking and the development of solidarity and community economies in urban and rural areas
- A capitalisation workshop in Timisoara (June 2025)
- A final webinar with RIPESS EUROPE (September 2025)

Social Solidarity Economy

Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) is a way to satisfy human needs and rights through social, cultural, economic activities that reinforce values of social justice, ecological sustainability, cooperation, mutuality, community and democracy.

The SSE is an economy aimed at a different form of development from the mainstream profit-oriented one. It includes organisations whose purpose is more focused on cultural, social and environmental values rather than the search for financial gain and growth.

It is expressed by a constellation of networked grassroots groups, civic organisations, consumers and producer-based platforms, cooperatives and social enterprises, and collaborative public institutions.

The SSE is already happening through thousands of citizens' initiatives, solidarity practices and collaborative networks all over Europe and in various parts of the world. It increasingly asserts itself as a vibrant and promising socio-economic model.

Keywords

- Participatory local development
- Ecological transition
- Social inclusion
- Territorial cohesion
- Agroecology
- Transformative impact of actions & activate cultural change.



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Solidarius Italia was born in 2009 as an Italian member of the transnational network Solidarius, based in Brazil and part of the Latin American movement of the solidarity economy. Its creator and animator is the liberation philosopher Euclides André Mance. With him, since the early 2000s, we have built a solid working relationship: a dense theoretical component, fuelled by constant communication. Our common action is guided by values and ideas that can be summarised in a few key words: humanity, community, mutuality, solidarity, cooperation, buen-vivir, justice, democracy, participation and sustainability. This also inspires the "Manifesto" of the transnational network Solidarius. As an Italian member, our task is to adapt the strategies and technologies developed and experimented in the Brazilian and Latin American context, to the reality of our country.

Solidarius Italia is a non-profit social micro-enterprise operating in the field of solidarity economy and adult education. The members of Solidarius are 7 people (3 women, including the coordinator who is also the legal manager and 4 men) and 2 employees with permanent contracts: one full-time and one part-time. The members combine different experience: university and research, training and education, project management, communication and community work.

All members of Solidarius Italia have their roots in the Italian traditions of popular education, mutualism, associations for the promotion of social rights, cooperative movement, ethical finance, international solidarity, SSE network at different scales. The organisation works in partnership with many other actors at local, regional and national levels to facilitate the growth of networks between different forms of enterprises and solidarity economy initiatives. It also carries out training and education activities, from high schools to formal and informal lifelong learning centres.

In 2016 Solidarius Italia – thanks to the collaborative work with other organisations and research centres – established a Scientific Committee that supports Solidarius staff in study, research and design activities. Working in different territories and neighbourhoods, in different part of Italy (in disadvantaged or peripheral areas, and with partners also working with people with psycho-physical disabilities), Solidarius Italia has developed research activities and has produced, during the years, many tools and training material for its popular education sessions. Solidarius Italia is also working on setting up online platforms and webinars.

Solidarius Italia is part of the international Solidarius network, based in Brazil, and has contributed to the development of Solidarius.net. It is among the founders and members of various other local, national and international networks, from the social and solidarity economy districts of Rome and Florence to the national (RIES) and European SSE network. Solidarius Italia is also one of the founders of the RIPESS Europe network for the promotion of the social and solidarity economy.

Website: <https://www.solidariusitalia.it/>



The Ardiglione/Nidiaci garden lies in the very heart of Florence's Oltrarno, just behind the Carmine church where the Renaissance was born, in an area devastated by overtourism.

The garden and adjacent building was donated in 1920 by the American Red Cross to make an "entity for popular education with special regard to children", and became the core of community life in Florence's poorest district, with activities for children and adolescents.

When a real estate speculator drove the children out of the building, the local families managed to get hold of the garden, which they have been managing for 11 years as a Commons, involving a vast network of citizens, artists, immigrants, shopkeepers, schools, charities with countless activities. It is a key example of a "pact for shared administration", a specific Italian institution which allows "active citizens" to act as partners and not as grantees, in the common interest.



Lofoio is an independent organization in Florence. We are an unaffiliated association inspired both by the FabLab international experience and the self builders movement. We share tools in an abandoned yet welcoming workspace.



Interiors are built and maintained by our makers. Hobbyists, artists, creatives, professionals: we share know-how with everybody, with a lifelong beginner point of view and a playful attitude. We enable people to use our tools, to make friends with technology, to solve problems. We help experts to share their techniques and skills. We merge tradition and innovation. We respect workers' rights, spreading awareness of social and environmental impact.



CRIES-Resource Center for Ethical and Solidarity Initiatives was initiated in Timișoara, in 2009. The organization was developed by a group of citizens and local associations involved in the project Territories of co-responsibilities, implemented between 2007-2009, by the Council of Europe in partnership with the City Hall of Timișoara, the City Hall of Mulhouse, as well as other territorial actors from Trento and Paris.

CRIES coordinated a participatory approach for territorial planning of social cohesion strategy, based on the involvement of citizens in defining well-being together with public authorities and other territorial actors. Rethinking social progress, transforming the economy, and sharing the responsibilities to assure well-being for all, including future generations, are very important objectives for us.

Thus, the CRIES association has developed as a resource center for social solidarity economy, promoting participatory democracy, community-supported agriculture, Fair Trade, responsible consumption, and working integration enterprises.

The main area of intervention: education – pilot actions – advocacy – networking:

- developing educational programmes to promote responsible consumption, social solidarity economy, Fair Trade, sustainable development. More than 3.000 people have participated in educational programmes addressed to professionals, teachers, young people, volunteers, disadvantaged producers, consumers ;
- initiating innovative pilot actions – CRIES supported the development in Romania of community supported agriculture model (CSA), LA PAS Festival to promote sustainable food;
- raising awareness and advocacy for Fair Trade, social economy and fighting food waste;
- networking - a solid partnership network with more than 120 organisations and public institutions from Romania. More than 60 conferences, workshops, debates and public events have been organised by CRIES

Since 2009, CRIES has been one of the first organisations involved in the promotion of social solidarity economy in Romania. CRIES is a founding member of RIPESS Europe and member of Romanian Network of Social Economy (RISE).

Website: www.cries.ro



ASAT – Asociația pentru Susținerea Agriculturii Țărănești started in 2007 in Timișoara as an informal initiatives of consumers and producers interested to support a sustainable food system.

In 2014, the group of initiators decided to develop a juridical structure, an association, to promote and sustain ASAT model in Romania. ASAT means a direct and solidarity-based partnership between citizens from urban areas and local small-scale organic farmers to share risks and benefits associated with locally produced organic food.

ASAT is inspired by the French AMAP model of CSA (AMAP - Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne in French), and it was developed in Romania with the support of URGENCI network (<https://urgenci.net/>) and CRIES association (www.cries.ro).

ASAT also nourishes a critical movement for maintaining local small-scale food producers through building solidarity economy alternatives to market, based on the desire to preserve social and environmental capital, as guarantees of healthy and independent lives.



Reciproc is a social enterprise, managed by the Alimenterra association, to support short food supply chains, to promote responsible consumption and healthy food programs. The social enterprise was initiated with the support of European public funds, in Timișoara.

Reciproc is an independent coffee shop with a rich selection of local and artisanal products, as well as Fair Trade products and products from social enterprises. The organization is also involved in educational programs developed in collaboration with schools and in organizing a large diversity of events to promote local producers.

Reciproc also means a constant preoccupation with building fair working relationships, which allow the personal and professional development of all those involved, as well as the progressive participation of workers in the management of the social business.

Reciproc carefully chooses its funders and partners, avoiding accessing funding from organizations with negative impacts on the environment or society.



UFISC (Federal Union for Intervention of Cultural Structures) is a national non-profit solidarity organisation that regroups professional organisations in all arts and cultural sectors (popular music, theatre, visual and plastic arts, dance, street art, puppet theatre, and radio, among others). It represents 19 networks, members of UFISC, which in turn comprise more than 2500 structures that develop a multitude of activities including artistic creation, production and dissemination of shows or events, cultural action on the territory, creation, through arts, of a public space for citizens, transmission of know-how, supporting the development of amateur practices, etc.

These non-profit, associative and cooperative structures, rooted in citizen initiatives, and which link social and solidarity economy to the artistic field, are working on a plurality of projects. They create open and lively spaces, and links between people; they support freedom of artistic expression; they organise cooperative territorial networks, among peers; and they promote cultural diversity and cultural rights of the individuals. Since 1999, the members have been committed to the Manifesto: “For an alternative economy for art and culture” (http://www.ufisc.org/images/Contenu_Ufisc/UFISC_Manifesto_EN.pdf).

UFISC observes practices and analyses alternative modes of actions, in order to reflect on social utility, on the relationships to territories, citizen participation, and hybrid economic models. As a recognised actor at a national level, it contributes to consultations on public policies of the State and of regional authorities, and to the professional structuring of the sectors. It supports structures, teams and project leaders through various systems. It leads cooperation initiatives, and in particular the management of shared spaces.

UFISC believes that the construction of the European Union cannot simply consist of the logic of the single market, and must assert itself in an ambitious political project, based on respect for human rights, diversity, and citizen involvement in the co-construction of public policies. With this political project, UFISC wishes to network with other actors from different European countries so as to exchange, support one another, invent and cooperate and thus contribute, in an ascending way, to the construction of an open space of cultures and solidarities.

Website: www.ufisc.org



Created in 1996, Actes-If, as a network, brings together 40 artistic and cultural independent places in Paris and the Ile-de-France Région. Coming from the civil society and with non-profit purposes, these independent places are dedicated to contemporary creation and consider the artistic experience in relationship with inhabitants, territories, artists, and cultures. They support cultural and artistic diversity, an ethic of sharing and collective dynamics.

Although they represents a diversity of projects and various artistic forms - in theatre, circus, plastic arts, street arts, music, puppetry etc. - , these places have in common values, principles and ways of doing reunited under the Actes If network charter. Members gather around artistic, cultural, social and economic issues. Actes-if is a member of the UFISC.



Located in Aubervilliers in a popular northern suburb of Paris' inner crown since 2006, Les Poussières is a non-for-profit organization conducting artistic, cultural, educational and social projects.

A place for culture, encounters and creation for inhabitants and artists, we develop actions that fall within several artistic fields: visual arts, live performance, food, art in the public space, with an obvious porosity with the social, scientific or even environmental fields. At Les Poussières, you can attend shows, concerts, and other sound performances, participate in workshops, discover cooking recipes, meet and make beautiful encounters, dance, imagine and create together.

Our actions are based on getting together, exchanging and being permeable: between giving and learning, between artists and non-artists, between professionals and amateurs, between different artistic disciplines.

Our projects are also being exported, and more and more cities and public or private bodies are calling on us to carry out our projects in other territories, at the regional, national and international levels. We act there, as we do at home, in a dynamic of access to all, and by making our way in the urban structure, as close we can to the inhabitants.



Le Shakirail is a cultural space located in the 18th arrondissement of Paris and dedicated to artists, associations and local community life. It features shared resources: equipped workshops, dance/theater rehearsal rooms, a music room, associative offices, a shared kitchen and landscaped gardens. Formerly a checkroom and training center owned by the SNCF (1300m² of buildings and 2000m² of exteriors), this space is managed by the collective Curry Vavart since 2011.

Curry Vavart is a multidisciplinary art collective, committed to developing affordable shared workspaces in Paris for precarious cultural and social creators and projects. Created in 2006 by a group of young artists looking for work spaces, the collective occupied more than 15 vacant places waiting to be rehabilitated and to develop them into shared artistic workspaces for artists and associations.

Since 2021, the Shakirail has been awarded “Fabrique de territoire”, label by the French government recognizing its role as a resource center for local players. In 2024, the Shakirail is developing an action-research project based on participatory programming to empower local residents.



RIPESS Europe – is the European umbrella network of the Social Solidarity Economy organisations (part of the RIPESS intercontinental network), bringing together 37 national, sectoral and inter-sectoral networks in 15 EU countries (thus hundreds of non-profit entities and SSE enterprises). It aims at sharing best practices and engaging in joint actions that can expand and enhance the visibility of the Social Solidarity Economy [SSE]. The SSE is a movement that aims to change the current social and economic system based on cooperative and solidarity (local) circuit exchanges that connect individual needs with those of the community. SSE thus aims to produce, exchange and consume goods and services that meet the economic and social needs of local and international communities with an eco-systemic approach. It promotes economic democracy, social justice, environmental awareness, gender equity and a pluralist, multicultural society.

The network gathers thousands of SSE stakeholders and organisations at the European level, facilitating network inter-cooperation, awareness raising, peer-training and education and common advocacy, contributing to legal frameworks and public policies. The network's objectives were defined at the Foundation Congress in Barcelona (2011) and can be summarised in the following goals and activities:

- Highlighting solidarity economy networks, actors and initiatives
- Sharing experience and good practice in SSE
- Developing and promoting economic cooperation between SSE networks and actors
- Building shared projects and developing collective intelligence
- Supporting the emergence of a common vision and voice and promoting it at the EU and UN institutional levels
- Promoting public policies that allow and support the development of solidarity economy
- Facilitating the training and education activities regarding SSE at all levels

RIPESS Europe has organised thematic themes which are developed by working groups, as well as a research-action programme called “Panorama overview of Solidarity Economy Initiatives in Europe”. The main areas of activity range from facilitating citizen-led initiatives on popular education and contributions to formal and non-formal vocational training, cooperative learning, peer exchange of economic initiatives (cooperative and social enterprises, community enterprises, value chains, distribution and logistics, democratic governance, etc.), community mapping, solidarity funds and ethical finance, energy and mobility cooperative platforms, responsible tourism, community supported agriculture, participatory guarantee systems, evaluating and measuring the added-value and impact of SSE (social balance of SSE organisations and enterprises), responsible consumerism and social innovation based on needs and appropriate technologies.

The strategic approach of the solidarity economy in Europe presents challenges to its consolidation, including a major factor: the training of actors. RIPESS Europe, has been focusing on the role of popular education and peer training in promoting networking and new modes for training solidarity economy’s actors. This work is inspired by the Latin-American experience, in the sense of improving the experience and the reflective thought which emerges from the relation between theory and practice. The methodology used presupposes a politico-pedagogical project in Solidarity Economy education, built in order to strengthen and consolidate the political project of the solidarity economy and of the workers that support it.

RIPESS Europe involves its member networks in various activities according to their skills and expertise and the practices they are engaged in. Therefore, the persons working on this project will be individuals affiliated to member organisations.



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