

Reinforcing Social and Solidarity Economy for the Unemployed, Uneducated and Refugees

MoreThanAJob Consortium

Executive Statement

MoreThanAJob project was able to bring many different changes for the Mediterranean countries targeted in the project and highlight the main strategic framework of the Programme is based on 4 Thematic Objectives and 11 Priorities as a contribution to the main socio-economic and environmental challenges of the Mediterranean region by focusing on fostering fair, equitable, and sustainable economic, social and territorial development and addressing common challenges in the same environment which make advances in cross-border integration and valorize participating countries' territories and values.

Aspiring to empower both host community members and refugees, the MoreThanAJob project (an ENI CBC MED initiative) has put 3 focus areas together in a comprehensive framework: responsive social service delivery, progressive social and solidarity economy, and adaptive educational systems. To promote the development of innovative social schemes based on the cooperation among Social and Solidarity Economy actors and public administrations to enhance the social and labor inclusion of vulnerable groups in our societies.

MoreThanAJob made a change in the way Social and Solidarity Economy actors and public institutions work together for services provided to unemployed people, focusing on vulnerable groups.

The development of a framework of new social pilot schemes as well as the development of policy briefs and suggestions will improve the planning of policies adapted to the needs of the target groups. In the long run, the access to employment and the education system of such targets will be enhanced.

Key Messages

Recommendation 1: Promotion of Social Generativity

Recommendation 2: Peer-to-peer Counselling Service

Recommendation 3: Enhancing Social Integration through Community Service Interventions

Recommendation 4: Establishing and Strengthening the Capacity of Social Enterprises

Recommendation 5: Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Recommendation 6: Developing Solidarity Economy Value Chains

Recommendation 7: Recognitions of Competences acquired Outside the Hosting Country

Recommendation 8: Labour Market Integration throughout Skills Matching and Youth Empowerment

Recommendation 9: Development of Business Education through Education bridging Programs

Recommendation 10: Promote an inclusive communication approach and social cohesion

Introduction

This Policy Brief provides insights into the implications of “MoreThanAJob” Project outputs by implementing the developed framework efficiently and effectively. Aiming to support the development and growth of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), this Brief proposes ways in which SSE should be reformed and improved from different aspects. This will directly maximize the impact on the target groups.

The policy brief at hand aims to address the question: What roles can the social and solidarity economy (SSE) play in addressing the problems faced by unemployed migrants and refugees, particularly in contexts of austerity and welfare retrenchment, growing xenophobia, and populist politics? Focusing on selected Mediterranean Partner Countries “Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy, and Greece”, the findings of the project “Reinforcing social and solidarity economy for the unemployed, uneducated and refugees”, Urban Communities and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups deepen our understanding of institutions and policies which can help SSE to play a constructive role in the integration of unemployed, refugees and migrants into societies.

About the Project

MoreThanAJob will bring a change in the way SSE actors and public institutions work together for services-provision to unemployed people, focusing on vulnerable groups (uneducated and newly arrived migrants/refugees). The development of a framework of new social pilot schemes as well as the development of policy briefs and suggestions will improve the planning of policies adapted to the needs of the target groups. This policy brief is developed as part of the MoreThanAJob project funded by the EU under the ENI CBC MED program.

The project aims at enhancing the development of cooperation mechanisms between the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and the public administration to improve social services for vulnerable groups to increase their opportunities for social and labour inclusion. As part of the project, the consortium has developed a framework to support the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors and the public administration (PA) representatives in co-developing and implementing innovative social schemes to reach the project aim.

Based on the analysis of international and local best practices in services for the promotion of social and employment inclusion of vulnerable people, the MoreThanAJob framework identifies three main priorities that will support the development of welfare services: (1) Social service delivery is increasingly responsive and generates greater social stability and livelihood outcomes, based on the needs of the host, refugee and immigrants’ populations, (2) Social and Solidarity Economy is progressively growing and provides greater local economic development opportunities for the most vulnerable community members, and (3) Education System is dynamically adaptive to market needs and allows greater access to innovative and agile technical education and vocational training programs targeting different levels of education including un-educated population.

This policy brief aims at providing an overview of the current context in the countries targeted in the project (Greece, Lebanon, Jordan, Italy, and Palestine) regarding the implementation and on-going discussion on policy areas identified under each priority within the MoreThanAJob framework. Based on the current context, we have identified some policy recommendations that could support the actors involved, namely the PA and the SSE actors, in the development of policies and action plans aligned with the indications provided in the MoreThanAJob framework to develop and implement the concept of social solidarity economy, as a new economy under MoreThanAJob Project.

About Social Solidarity Economy

While the International Labour Organization (ILO) has not yet issued an official definition of SSE, ILO still sees SSE as the “concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services, and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity.” The ILO definition might seem a little too abstract, but RIPESS has provided a more detailed and specific definition of SSE; “The Social Solidarity Economy is an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. In SSE ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy—production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption, and governance. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private, and third sectors.” In short, SSE tries to reconcile the objectives of economic growth and development on the one hand and the principles of equity and social justice on the other and places the human being at the centre of the development process’s concerns.

SSE is an economical system that is focusing more on the role of enterprises as complementing channels of goods and services provision, including vulnerable groups—women and People with Disabilities. SSE differs from the private sector in its focus on economic activities that place long-term social and environmental objectives as a priority rather than maximum profit (i.e. social profitability over pure financial profit) and works towards more sustainable and inclusive activities that can meet the various SDGs such as poverty eradication, promotion of decent work, and equality among others. SSE promotes active citizenship participatory and pluralistic economic systems without aiming to replace but to complement and help re-localize production. The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) can be termed the “third sector.”

Overall Context of MoreThanAJob across the Mediterranean Region

Greece

In Greece, the on-going wars in the Middle East, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the environmental crisis led to an increased migration flow. However, this creates further challenges for Greece which struggles against an economic crisis and high unemployment rates. Thus, the SSE would become an important factor to help vulnerable groups integrate socially and become financially independent. The last economic crisis in Greece encouraged the integration of SSE as a method to cope with the recession and address market needs. With the crisis being the first stepping stone, the SSE has been developing and expanding its activities. This included different services such as food distribution, free medical check-ups, commercial networks, and many others. Greece’s legal framework also changed to become inclusive of the SSE in 2011 and 2016, which gave a great boost to the SSE. However, the development and progress did not go as expected and were drastically different from the other EU countries. Nonetheless, the potential for great growth still exists; especially in sustainability, social benefits, and economic activities.

Lebanon

Lebanon, as well, has been struggling against several crises, including covid-19, with the worst of all being the economic and financial crises. Lebanon's economy is in a dire situation, and the flow of Syrian immigrants only created further strains on the economy and created a wedge between the refugees and the host community. This negative social inclusion is severely hindering and threatening the social stability of the Lebanese community. Thus, there is a drastic need for this negative inclusion to be replaced with positive incorporation and equal access to opportunities and recourse; especially the

vulnerable groups. With the MoreThanAJob and SSE, integration attempts the overall situation is slowly but steadily witnessing changes and improvement in different areas.

Jordan

Jordan has several struggles dealing with poverty, unemployment, and refugees. The implementation of many projects that aim at bettering people's lives has been hindered and obstructed as a result. Nonetheless, the Jordanian government has been trying to counter those issues by establishing institutions and developing policies, which include SSE policies.

Through the MoreThanAJob project, "priority 3: Education System is dynamically adaptive to market needs and allows greater access to innovative and agile technical education and vocational training programs targeting different levels of education including un-educated population" was the main focus for Jordan. Through the project, frameworks were developed for efficient and effective implementation to help support SSE development and growth. The development of SSE is important in Jordan's quest to address employment, refugees, welfare retrenchment, and other problems faced through education.

Italy

Within the Italian context, different priorities and social schemas were identified as being the main concerns that need to be worked on. These social schemas align with the MoreThanAJob Project main three priorities identified in the framework; concerning priority 1, the need to promote social Generativity at policy levels, and to enhance social integration through community service interventions were recognized. This comes from the fact that within the Italian context national regulations on social Generativity do not exist despite the adoption of laws regionally.

While MoreThanAJob also focuses on growing and strengthening SSE (priority 2) in the targeted countries, the need to develop SSE value chains becomes evident as an important social scheme. Moreover, MoreThanAJob emphasizes the significance of developing educational systems, especially TVET, to accommodate the needs of the marketplace and to start addressing it by providing qualified professionally trained workers.

Despite universities' led initiatives to develop practices of recognition of previously acquired knowledge and competencies, and the activation of a National Coordination for the Evaluation of Refugees Qualification, Italy still lacks a framework for the recognition of knowledge and competencies acquired outside. This makes it impossible to obtain a certificate of acquired qualification, thus, Italy needs to start recognizing the competencies acquired outside, integrate the labour market through skill matching and youth empowerment, and create a valid certification system; especially for migrants who can't prove their knowledge and competency.

Palestine

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented fiscal crisis, around 150,000 Palestinian lost their jobs. In 2020, the Palestinian economy contracted around 10 to 12 % of the largest annual contractions since the Palestinian Authority was established in 1994. As a result of the Palestinian system of social protection, education, and health have come under great pressure facing increasing needs and complicated operating environments. Furthermore; the global health crisis and the Israeli occupation restrictive policies imposed on Palestinians by cutting revenues. This contributed to an 80 % reduction in the Palestinian Authority's (PA) overall revenues, which forced the adoption of additional austerity measures, and this greatly amplified the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Palestinians. Statics published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics PCBS show a decrease in unemployment rates starting from the year 2018 up to July 2021. "Unemployment Rate in Palestine decreased to 26.40 % in the second quarter of 2021 from 27.80 % in the first quarter of 2021."

Study results, conclusions and recommendations

The evidence that is available for the research in relation to the current and previous Policy Briefs, and trends of the SSE in Greece make apparent that there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed, in order to strengthen the SSE sector. More specifically, there is need to support the human, social and financial capital for the SSE actors. Building on our previous Policy Briefs, we propose 4 recommendations that further put the target groups in the front and centre of the policy-making process.

Recommendation 1: Promotion of Social Generativity

Social Generativity as a concept refers to the idea that individual people and/or groups are provided with new capacities to be able to actively participate and act socially, while improving the surrounding environment, empowering the people, and contributing to cultural change actively. The idea of social Generativity helps individuals to act collectively and increase their interconnectivity to address their needs sustainably both economically and socially. Through social Generativity, the people can urge the public authorities to regulate and draft laws related to social enterprises and implement them which would lead to a decentralized economic development through private-public partnerships.

Recommendation 2: Peer-to-peer Counselling Service

'Focusing on empowering marginalized groups so they become a producer instead of a seeker of services and help' should become a common approach among the different sectors, which needs more coordination and collaboration. It is recommended not only to use an empowerment approach targeting marginalized groups but also to use social solidarity as a way to fight poverty and improve their living conditions.

Recommendation 3: Enhancing Social Integration through Community Service Interventions

It is highly recommended to promote active citizenship through community service programs: Community service develops an increased sense of social responsibility among the youth, which promotes active citizenship within the younger generation. Community Service builds relationships and 'social connectedness with peers and adults and exposes the youth to diversity and multiculturalism. The establishment of this civic engagement will lead to the promotion of active citizenship and synergies-building mechanisms. Therefore, governments are encouraged to work towards the recognition of community-based social enterprises.

Public authorities should be expected to encourage public administrations to support the citizens' development of initiatives with collective interests. Citizens too should be given the chance and facilitations to submit project proposals, even those developed voluntarily, and be provided with adequate resources, and aid in covering expenses. SSE Actors' involvement should be done within a framework of understanding the scope of coordination to help create generative welfare, which can only be implemented through inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and the inclusion of third-sector (SSE) organizations in policymaking.

Recommendation 4: Establishing and Strengthening the Capacity of Social Enterprises

The capacities of different stakeholders, including public administrations, need to be enhanced to better deal with employment and education issues. This includes strengthening the cooperation between the different stakeholders through positive inclusion, training, and in some cases the complete restructuring of the institutions to empower them. The strengthening of those capacities would not only give vulnerable groups access to adequate opportunities that can help them lead a decent and respectful life, but will also aid the institutions in working together to plan, implement, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the social services delivered. Platforms, where training materials on feasibility, business planning, decision making, etc. are available for SSE actors, should be included within the capacity-building stage.

The different skills obtained by the vulnerable groups need to be identified whether it is education, actual skills, or experiences. By identifying the skills, through research studies and analysis along with labour market mapping studies, their full potential can successfully be incorporated within the labour market and entrepreneurship chances can be created. Universities could be used to aid in developing policies to reduce unemployment. Such policies should include vocational training and education, entrepreneurship, youth innovation incentives, and education for the uneducated among others.

SSE actors can help aid the development of social entrepreneurship policies by setting up strategies for investments and capacity-building activities. It is recommended to create pressure group gatherings where representatives from the private sector and SSE Actors get together. These groups can help put relevant laws, regulations, and memos into action and engage in the establishment of socially responsible enterprises. The involvement of social private actors in the process can improve the quality of life in the communities where they operate.

Recommendation 5: Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship

To achieve successful entrepreneurship for vulnerable groups, connections between entrepreneurs, the exchange of knowledge, and the promotion of innovation are required. Otherwise, there will be no sustainability in any commercial enterprise, starting with providing funding for innovation, especially gadgets, digital media, and workplaces. Jobs could be shared with successful local entrepreneurs to achieve knowledge sharing. Building on the success stories and best practices will enhance and develop the best practices in the social solidarity approach and will be a motivator to create change and integrate marginalized populations to develop their situations. In addition, there is a need to develop linkages and channels between migrant entrepreneurs and refugees, business ecosystems, and the private sector in general. Create a matching platform between entrepreneurs (and potential entrepreneurs) from vulnerable groups and potential employers, partners, and investors.

Understanding and education are critical properties for the social integration and monetary self-sufficiency of susceptible groups. In the sector of SSE, precise education ought to be carried out to quickly gather precise abilities that assist social entrepreneurship. Therefore, education in social entrepreneurship ought to be primarily based totally on entrepreneurship facilities and vocational education establishments to educate the uneducated, immigrants, and refugees. Training packages ought to have great flexibility in phrases of education methods (sensible education) and education location (distinct nearby contexts, which include refugee camps, settlements, etc.). The context of the education packages ought to range and be technical, monetary, etc. Skills are primarily based totally on social entrepreneurship.

Recommendation 6: Developing Solidarity Economy Value Chains

National strategies will need to develop and implement a coherent strategy for the integration of vulnerable groups socially and economically. This can only be done by raising awareness of the entrepreneurial potential of vulnerable groups within the labour market. Considering the sensitivity of tackling labour market integration of refugees and internally displaced persons from a social stability lens, it is crucial to promote positive social inclusion through the enhancement of the capacity of public administration dealing with employment and education and increase inter-ministerial coordination for wider, equitable and non-discriminative inclusion. In addition to that, there is a high necessity to engage social and solidarity economy actors in policymaking through developing government-led policy dialogue and social. Moreover, all concerned parties should be asked to develop mechanisms for social stability and tension reduction and draft inclusive policies for refugees' employment regulations.

Regulatory and legal requirements for entrepreneurship in vulnerable groups need to be reassessed and simplified, and a framework for cooperation between public administrations, stakeholders, and the private sector should be created to provide the people with information, facilitations, and assistance. This is most vital for refugees and migrants who try to register a business or receive a public service.

Entrepreneurs, innovators, and SMEs are recommended to join their efforts in advocating for the reintegration of innovation into the public sector (Ministry of planning and development). The presence of the Ministry of planning and development could lead to an environment that promotes creativity and innovation within the host countries' companies, organizations, and individuals. Additionally, the ministry would hold the following responsibilities: (i) Coordination of national statistics; (ii) Environmental policy, planning, and management; (iii) National monitoring and evaluation; (iv) socio-economic planning, coordinating, and monitoring; and (v) Spatial development. Hence, the implementation of this ministry is unquestionably crucial to rejuvenating innovation and development among the host Community.

Recommendation 7: Recognitions of Competences acquired Outside the Hosting Country

There is a need for collaboration between relevant ministries to define a national framework for the recognition of competencies, qualifications, and expertise acquired in other countries. It is difficult for migrants without previous education certificates to prove their knowledge and competencies. Therefore, it is recommended to

foster the dialogue between the public administrations and educational institutions for the development of common standards for the recognition of previous qualifications to help support the inclusion of refugees in the labour market and gives them a chance for higher education. This could be done through internal procedures and mechanisms for evaluating the qualifications of refugees and holders of subsidiary protection even if relevant documents were missing.

Public administrations could also work with accreditation institutions to develop a strategy for awarding certificates of experience from the national educational authorities as per a competency assessment test. Collaboration between universities and associated ministries/private sector could also be strengthened to help benefit the vulnerable groups properly. It is also vital to assist academic institutions with proper skills training and mentoring to be able to provide accreditation, certification, and training-based capacity-building TVET programs while including consultancies. The host community can also support educational institutions by providing essential learning materials to learners. This all flows into the idea of empowering people and regenerating existing resources through cooperation between local, regional, and national authorities, which can help decision-makers to become aware of priority areas and the social activities that could benefit community development based on the available skills.

Skill matching programs can, also, facilitate and match the labour market demand and supply by involving high-education institutions, TVET educational institutes, and potential employers in active cooperation. This will help increase working chances for refugees and migrants as well as the host community via enhancement plans fostered by improved communication, and the provision of technical support services to the available market requirements. Accredited migrant workers would have better chances to find matching jobs opportunity by overcoming the oversight on skilled emigrants which would lead to better inclusiveness in the labour market. Moreover, the involvement of the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education will become vital to bridge the gap between education and work as they promote developmental programs that can be accessed by all equally, especially those with no certificate of acquired qualification. This should also include apprenticeships to train young people which can help address the usual curricula-relevance problems and information failure during recruitment processes.

Recommendation 8: Labour Market Integration throughout Skills Matching and Youth Empowerment

Skill matching programs can facilitate and match between the labour market demand and the supply by involving high-education institutions, TVET educational institutes, and potential employers in active cooperation. This will help increase working chances for refugees and migrants as well as the host community via enhancement plans fostered by improved communication, and the provision of technical support services to the available market requirements. Accredited migrant workers would have better chances to find matching jobs opportunity by overcoming the oversight on skilled emigrants which would lead to better inclusiveness in the labour market. Moreover, the involvement of the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education will become vital to bridge the gap between education and work as they promote developmental programs that can be accessed by all equally, especially those with no certificate of acquired qualification. This should also include apprenticeships to train young people which can help address the usual curricula-relevance problems this will foster the capacity of developing career guidance services that are aware of the labour market needs and can more effectively support young people in finding employment. Therefore, cooperation mechanisms between these two authorities should be fostered and plans for improving their communication should be enhanced.

Recommendation 9: Development of Business Education through Education bridging Programs

One of the maximum essential matters is understanding and education; these are critical properties for the social integration and monetary self-sufficiency of susceptible groups. In the sector of SSE, precise education ought to be carried out to quickly gather precise abilities that assist social entrepreneurship. Therefore,

education in social entrepreneurship ought to be primarily based totally on entrepreneurship facilities and vocational education establishments to educate the uneducated, immigrants, and refugees. Training packages ought to have great flexibility in phrases of education methods (sensible education) and education location (distinct nearby contexts, which include refugee camps, settlements, etc.). The context of the education packages ought to range and be technical, monetary, etc. Skills primarily based totally on social entrepreneurship.

Recommendation 10: Promote an inclusive communication approach and social cohesion

Establishing a cross-border network for coordination and crisis response and liaising with international donors to report, mobilize resources and advocate for cross-border cooperation in the field of social inclusion and promote active citizenship through community service programs. Considering the sensitivity of tackling labour market integration of refugees and internally displaced persons from a social stability lens, it is crucial to promote positive social inclusion through the enhancement of the capacity of public administration dealing with employment and education and increase inter-ministerial coordination for wider, equitable and non-discriminative inclusion. In addition to that, there is a high necessity to engage social and solidarity economy actors in policymaking through developing government-led policy dialogue and social. Moreover, all concerned parties should be asked to develop mechanisms for social stability and tension reduction and draft inclusive policies for refugees' employment regulations.

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Disclaimer: This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of MoreThanAJob project consortium and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union of the programme management structures.