



HANDS-ON WORKSHOP ON THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

September 17-18, 2025
Murcia, Spain

INTRODUCTION

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (**IEMed**), the Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy (**CEPES**) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (**AECID**) are convening a regional **hands-on workshop** on the **Social Economy** (SE) in the Southern Mediterranean.

The event will take place in **Murcia, Spain**, on **17–18 September 2025**, as part of the European Social Economy Week, coinciding with the city's designation as Spanish Capital of the Social Economy 2025.

This initiative forms part of the rollout of the **Masar al'an program**, promoted by AECID, and aligns with the priorities of the **Team Europe Initiative** (TEI) on technical training, inclusive skills development, and entrepreneurship promotion.

The hands-on workshop will bring together key **stakeholders from across the Southern Mediterranean** to validate and enrich the preliminary findings of the *Needs Assessment of the Social Economy in the Southern Mediterranean* report, developed by IEMed. These findings are based on interviews conducted by IEMed's consultant, Montserrat Corbella, and have been significantly informed by the input of SE actors from the region.

Throughout the workshop, participants will collectively review and discuss a **situational analysis** of the SE landscape in the region, a strategic **SWOT analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), and a proposed **Theory of Change** (ToC) framework, outlining the paths for systemic transformation and support of the sector.

The workshop is conceived as a **hands-on working space** to engage in in-depth discussion of key **identified challenges** and **to co-develop concrete, actionable priorities** for strengthening the SE as a strategic response to economic, social, and environmental issues.

AGENDA

Day 1 – September 17, 2025

- 14:30-15:00 **Participant registration**
- 15:00-15:20 **Welcome session and opening remarks**
Juan Antonio Pedreño, President, CEPES
Roger Albinyana, Managing director, IEMed
Heba Handoussa, Acting president, FEMISE
Luisa García, Head of cooperation with the Arab World, AECID
- 15:20-16:20 **Presentation of the *Needs assessment of the social economy in the Southern Mediterranean report***
Introduction – **Carlos Lozano**, Head of international affairs, CEPES
Presentation of key findings – **Montserrat Corbella**, Consultant, IEMed
Methodology & analytical framework to inform sessions – **Arnau Gallard**, Head of sustainable development, IEMed

Working sessions facilitated by IEMed, ETF & ITCILO:

- 16:20-17:30 **Working session 1: SWOT analysis & problem tree development**
Facilitated discussion to validate key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) identified in the report, and to collaboratively build a problem tree mapping root causes and consequences that hinder the development of the SE in the Southern Mediterranean.

Parallel problem trees to support Theory of Change (ToC) assumptions:
1. Limited awareness, among the general population and particularly youth, of the SE as a viable alternative to public and public sectors in addressing emerging social and economic needs (e.g. care services, housing, health, circular economy, green transition, digital skills)
2. Insufficient knowledge and skills, both soft and sector-specific, to effectively establish and manage sustainable SE business models, particularly in rural territories (e.g. agri-food cooperatives, rural development, eco-tourism)
- 17:30-17:50 **Coffee break**
- 17:50-19:10 **Working session 2: Raising awareness and visibility of the SE**
This session, based on the 1st pillar of the ToC, will focus on increasing awareness and understanding of the SE among the general public and younger generations. Discussions will explore strategies to mobilize key actors from the public, private, and

social sectors—at local, national, and regional levels—through coordinated campaigns, partnerships, and educational initiatives that highlight the SE as a viable and impactful model for inclusive development.

19:10 **Social Economy Europe Awards Ceremony and Dinner**

Day 2 – September 18, 2025

09:00-09:10 **Summary of main findings working sessions 1 & 2**

09:10-10:30 **Working session 3: Skills development and learning pathways**

This session, based on the 2nd pillar of the ToC, will address actions needed to enhance the provision of relevant training services through established public and private systems at the national level. Discussions will include the mapping of current and emerging skills essential to meet the specific needs and challenges of the SE sector across the region.

10:30-10:50 **Coffee break**

10:50-12:00 **Working session 4: Innovative solutions for a sustainable sector**

This session, based on the 3rd pillar of the ToC, will explore innovative mechanisms to improve access to finance and enhance the sustainability of social enterprises. It will also examine creative strategies to support the SE sector's adaptation to the dual digital and climate transitions, and ways to scale successful initiatives across borders.

12:00-12:10 **Short break**

12:10-12:40 **Conclusions and way forward**

Synthesis of key takeaways from the workshop, identification of strategic next steps, and proposal of concrete actions to reinforce the SE as a transformative force in the Southern Mediterranean.

12:40-13:00 **Closing session**

Carlos Lozano, Head of international affairs, CEPES

Roger Albinyana, Managing director, IEMed

Maryse Louis, General manager, FEMISE

Luisa García, Head of cooperation with the Arab World, AECID

13:00-14:30 **Farewell lunch**

Afternoon **Participant departure**

WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

Prior to the workshop

To define the scope of our work on the Social Economy (SE) and given the absence of a common Mediterranean regional definition, it was agreed to adopt the definition set out in Spain's Social Economy Law (Law 5/2011). This definition encompasses cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations and associations engaged in economic activity; worker-owned companies (*sociedades laborales*); social integration enterprises; special employment centres; fishermen's guilds (*cofradías de pescadores*); agricultural transformation societies; and other unique entities established under specific regulations—provided they operate in accordance with the principles outlined in Article 4 of the law.

Based on this, several preparatory steps were undertaken prior to the workshop to inform the sessions, identify key findings, and support the formulation of actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening social economy (SE) support in the Southern Mediterranean region. Specifically, a comprehensive literature review and semi-structured interviews with representatives of SE organizations¹.

During the workshop

The two-day regional workshop is structured around a combination of presentations, participatory sessions, and strategic dialogue. It begins with opening remarks and the presentation of a needs assessment report, followed by two interactive working sessions focused on SWOT analysis and awareness-raising strategies. The second day continues with two additional working sessions, on skills development and innovative solutions for sector sustainability, each aligned with a pillar of the Theory of Change (ToC). The workshop concludes with a synthesis of findings, identification of next steps, and a formal closing session.

The working sessions will employ a structured and participatory format designed to foster collaborative dialogue and meaningful exchange of knowledge among participants. This approach is particularly effective for tackling complex development challenges, as it enables assistants to share insights, practical experiences, and innovative solutions in an inclusive and interactive environment.

¹ A series of interviews were carried out with representatives of SE organizations across Southern Mediterranean countries—Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Türkiye—as well as with members of the Euro-Mediterranean Social Economy Network (ESMED) based in Italy, Portugal, Brussels, and Luxembourg. These conversations provided valuable insights into the region's SE landscape and informed the development of the workshop content.

WHAT IS A SWOT ANALYSIS?

It is a strategic planning tool used to identify and evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to a project, organization, sector, or situation. It helps decision-makers understand internal and external factors that can influence success or failure.

Here's what each element means:

Strengths (internal): What are you doing well? What advantages or assets do you have?

Weaknesses (internal): What are you lacking? Where could you improve?

Opportunities (external): What external trends or changes could benefit you?

Threats (external): What external risks or challenges could harm your success?

The initial SWOT analysis has identified the following:

Helpful to achieving the objective

STRENGTHS

- **Deep community roots & employment generation:** Strong local embeddedness fosters resilience & solidarity. SE generates inclusive employment for women & youth, especially in cooperatives & community-based sectors.
- **Growing political recognition & strategic integration:** SE is increasingly recognized in national strategies, with progress in legal reform and integration into development agendas, though implementation gaps persist.
- **Favourable ecosystems:** Emerging support networks, territorial anchoring, and multi-actor collaboration foster innovation and scaling. Certain contexts demonstrate strong institutional engagement and structured support environments.

Internal attributes of the sector

Harmful to achieving the objective

WEAKNESSES

- **Fragmented legal frameworks:** Lack of coherent legislation, unclear legal identities & weak institutional coordination limit SE legitimacy and scalability.
- **Limited financial access & market constraints:** SE actors face barriers to credit & procurement due to poor access to tailored financial instruments, low financial literacy & burdensome procedures.
- **Lack of adequate skills & training:** Deficits in business, financial & impact measurement skills hinder growth. Support services are often generic, outdated, or mismatched to SE needs.
- **Low public awareness among youth & general population:** Limited understanding of SE among the public, youth, and officials weakens support and engagement. Few national awareness strategies exist.
- **Gender inequities & barriers to inclusion:** Women face systemic constraints in accessing resources, leadership roles & formal support. SE often replicates broader inequalities & lacks gender-sensitive policies.

OPPORTUNITIES

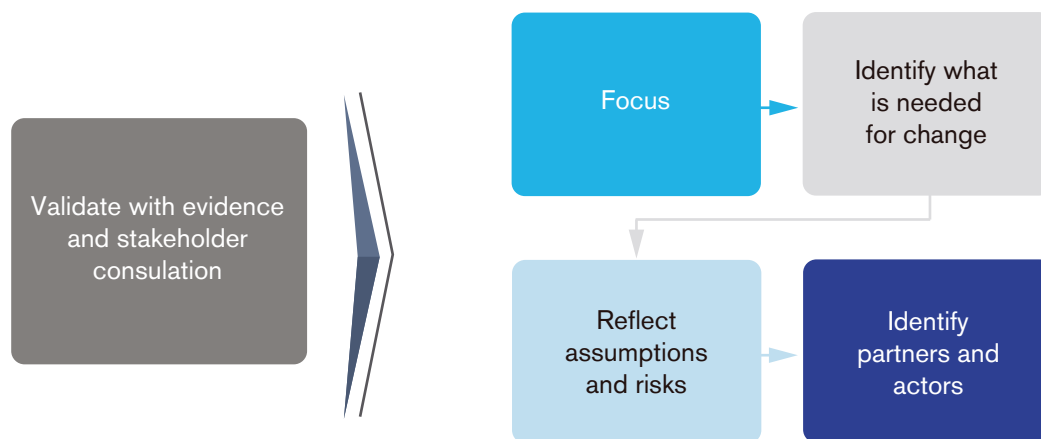
- **Sustainability and circular economy transition:** Policy momentum & funding are aligning around green, inclusive development. SE actors are well-positioned to lead sustainable & socially impactful solutions.
- **Digitalization as a catalyst:** Digital tools improve access to markets, training & financing, enabling SE growth & innovation, particularly in constrained or resource-scarce environments.
- **South-South cooperation and regional platforms:** Cross-country platforms enable learning, coordination & advocacy, fostering stronger and more cohesive SE ecosystems.
- **Limited market size as growth space:** The relatively small number of SE actors presents a strategic opportunity for innovation, ecosystem building & capacity development in a low-competition environment.

THREATS

- **Political instability and governance gaps:** Fragile institutions, informal economies & leadership voids undermine SE development and the consistent implementation of supportive policies.
- **Climate change and environmental stress:** Environmental challenges threaten the viability of resource-dependent SE initiatives.
- **Demographic trends:** Youth migration, rapid population growth & aging demographics challenge continuity and put additional strain on socio-economic systems.
- **Market access and informal competition:** SE actors struggle to access formal markets and face unfair competition from informal, unregulated entities, discouraging formalization and scaling.

WHAT IS A TOC?

It is a strategic planning framework used to map out how a specific intervention (e.g., a project, program, or policy) is expected to lead to its intended outcomes and long-term impact. It outlines the causal pathways between activities and results, making the underlying assumptions and contextual conditions explicit. For further details, please see the United Nations Development Group *Theory of Change UNDAF Companion Guide*².



Source: Theory of Change, UNDAF Companion Guide

Key components of a theory of change:

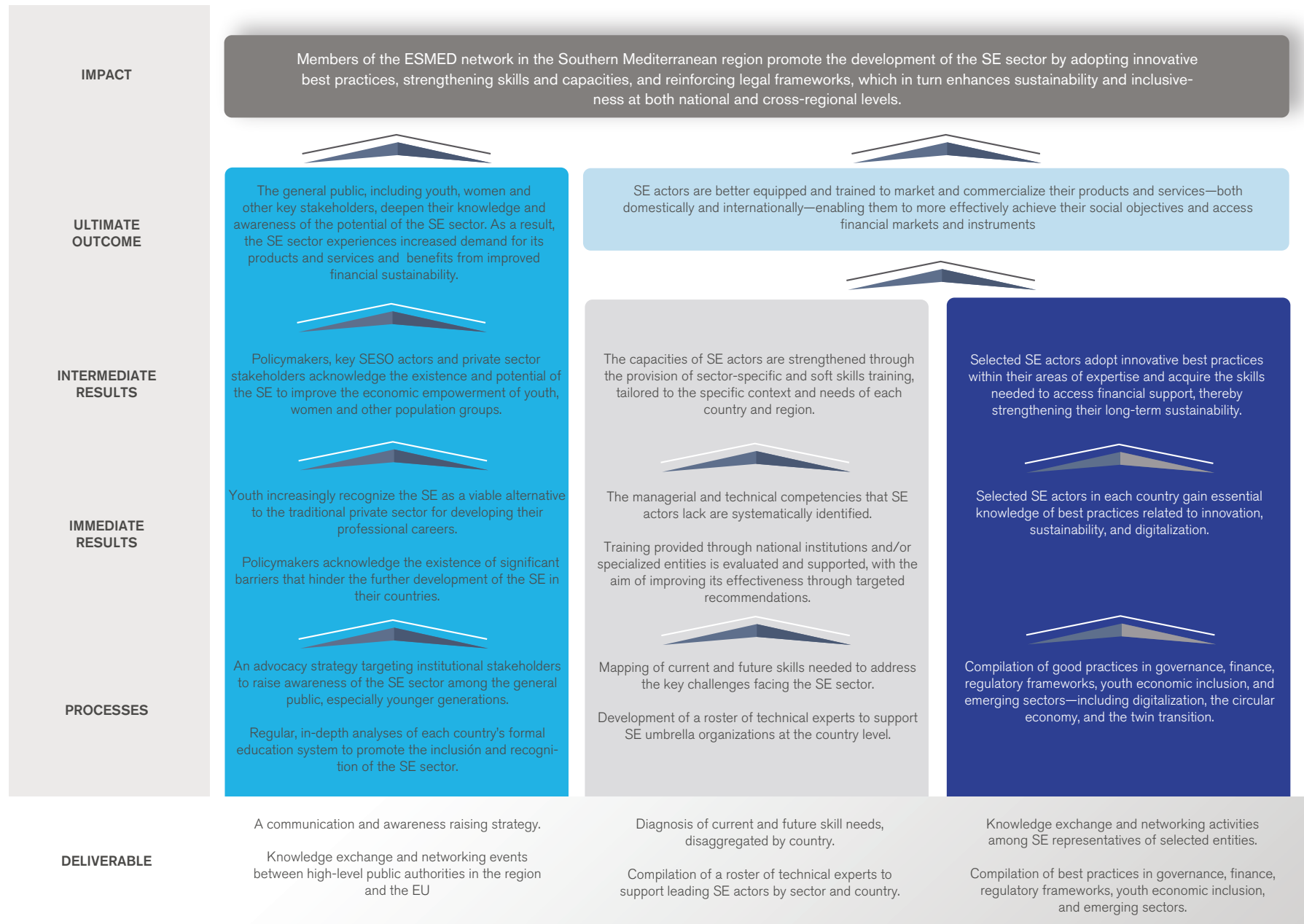
- **Impact:** The long-term transformational change you aim to contribute to at the societal or systemic level.
- **Ultimate outcome:** The highest-level result that your initiative directly seeks to achieve, reflecting significant and sustainable changes in the target context.
- **Intermediate results:** The key changes in behaviour, practices, capacities, or relationships that are necessary to achieve the ultimate outcome.
- **Immediate results:** The short-term changes or benefits that emerge directly from your activities, such as increased awareness, knowledge, or access to services.
- **Processes:** The specific activities, actions, or operational steps carried out to generate the intended results, including coordination, training, service delivery, or advocacy.
- **Deliverables:** The tangible products, tools, or outputs produced through your activities, such as training materials, toolkits, events or policy briefs, that support the achievement of results.

² <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-7-Theory-of-Change.pdf>

Why is a ToC useful?

- It clarifies **how change is expected to happen** and ensures all stakeholders have a shared understanding.
- It helps identify **gaps or weaknesses** in program logic.
- It serves as a foundation for **monitoring, evaluation, and learning**.
- It is particularly valuable in complex, multi-actor environments, such as **social economy ecosystem building**.

Draft Theory of Change:



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Collaborating partners

- Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
- Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy (CEPES)
- European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)
- European Training Foundation (ETF)
- International Training Centre of the International Labor Organization (ITCILO)
- Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE)
- Región de Murcia
- Ayuntamiento de Murcia
- Unión de Cooperativas de Trabajo Asociado de la Región de Murcia (UCOMUR)
- Unión de Cooperativas de Enseñanza de la Región de Murcia (UCOERM)

Workshop participant organizations

- Mutuelle Familiale/Mutuelle Hydraulique, Algeria
- Algerian Corporation for Social Engagement (ACSE), Algeria
- HDN (Human Development Network), Algeria
- El Nidaa (Egypt Foundation for Integrated Development), Egypt
- Jordan Co-operative Corporation (JCC), Jordan
- Mahis Association for Eco and Agricultural Tourism, Jordan
- Lebanese Social Enterprise Association (LSE), Lebanon
- ONG ACTIONS, Mauritania
- Office Du Développement De La Coopération (ODCO), Morocco
- REMESS, Morocco
- Centre Marocain des Etudes et des Recherches sur l'Entreprise Sociale, Morocco
- Union de l'Action Féministe, Morocco
- Cooperative Work Agency, Palestine
- Economic & Social Development Center, Palestine
- Committee on Sustainable Development Research for Cooperative Economy and Social Innovation, Palestine
- SHANTI, Tunisia
- Réseau des Associations de l'Economie Sociale (RADES), Tunisia
- Union Nationale des Mutuelles, Tunisia
- National Co-Operative Union, Türkiye
- Eskişehir Osmangazi University (ESOGÜ), Türkiye
- Foundation for the Support of Women's Labor (KEDV), Türkiye
- Simurg Women's Cooperatives Union, Türkiye



ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

IEMed. The European Institute of the Mediterranean is a policy-oriented think-and-do tank dedicated to Euro-Mediterranean relations. It produces evidence-based analysis and fosters dialogue through a multidimensional and inclusive approach, bridging research, policy, and cooperation across the Mediterranean.

CEPES. The Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy is the leading representative body for the social economy in Spain. It acts as a platform for dialogue with public authorities and represents the interests of various social economy enterprises, including cooperatives, worker-owned companies, mutual societies, and more.

AECID. The Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo is the Spanish agency for international development cooperation. It is responsible for promoting, programming, coordinating, and implementing Spain's public policies on international cooperation for sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, and global citizenship education.

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