



Inter-Agency Task Force on
Social and Solidarity Economy

KNOWLEDGE HUB WORKING PAPER

Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy

Policy Recommendations and
Directions for Future Research

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**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Inter-Agency Task Force on **Social and Solidarity Economy**

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Opportunities and Challenges of Statistics on SSE

This is one of three papers commissioned for a research project of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSE) Knowledge Hub for the SDGs.

The project, Opportunities and Challenges of Statistics on SSE, aims to enrich discussions on statistics on the social and solidarity economy (SSE) both within and beyond the UN system. It provides policy makers with current information on SSE statistics and makes recommendations for their improvement.

Working Papers:

Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy: The State of the Art, by Marie J. Bouchard and Gabriel Salathé-Beaulieu (August 2021)

Mapping International SSE Mapping Exercises, by Coline Compère and Jérôme Schoenmaeckers with Barbara Sak (August 2021)

Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy: Policy Recommendations and Directions for Future Research, by Rafael Chaves-Avila (August 2021)

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Acronyms

ADDES	Association pour le développement de la documentation sur l'économie sociale
CEPES	Spanish Social Economy Employers' Confederation
CIRIEC	International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy
COPAC	Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives
DIRCE	Directorio Central de Empresas (Spanish Central Business Register)
EC	European Commission
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EU	European Union
EURICSE	European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises
EUROSTAT	Statistical office of the European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GECES	Expert group on social economy and social enterprises of the European Commission
GDP	Gross domestic product
GSEF	Global Social Economy Forum network
ICA	International Co-operative Alliance
ILO/ OIT	International Labour Organization
INAES	National Institute for the Social Economy of Mexico
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NACE	Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community
NPO	Nongovernmental organization
NSO	National statistics office
PNUD/UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSE	Social and solidarity economy
SE	Social economy
SIRENE	Base Sirene des entreprises et de leurs établissements (French Central Business Register)
TSE	Third sector or social economy
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECE -	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNTFSSSE	United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy
WP	Working Paper

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Summary

This paper is a guide for governments interested in developing SSE statistics in their country and for researchers interested in working on improving and developing SSE statistics. The first section details why the production of SSE statistics is so important for governments and SSE actors. It highlights that these statistics help to make visible and legitimize the SSE as a new field of public action, and contribute to a better design, implementation and evaluation of policies aimed at promoting the SSE. The next section identifies the main types of SSE statistics to be produced. The first are quantitative economic statistics on the SSE within the framework of conventional economic aggregates and standard methodologies. The second are statistics that allow the quantification of SSE impacts. The third are statistics allowing comparisons at different levels, and between SSE and other types of economic entities such as for-profit enterprises. The next section focuses on the producers of statistics. It points out that, in addition to national statistical offices, which should play a leading role, universities and research centres, as well as “umbrella” organizations, are also key producers of statistics that can work together. Obstacles in the production of SSE statistics are the focus of the following section. The main ones are technical skills, tensions that blur the field of SSE, lack of funding to carry out statistical work and, finally, the absence of a normative mandate to push governments and statistical institutes to undertake this statistical endeavour. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy makers interested in the development of SSE statistics, as well as an outlook on areas for future research.

Introduction

With an aim toward making policy recommendations for the development of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) statistics, this paper highlights the original purpose of statistics, i.e. 'statistiks,' which means generating and using data for governments and their administrative bodies. The reference to 'statistiks' is particularly timely and necessary because, firstly, policymakers of governments at various levels in many countries have a great interest in SSE as a potentially useful means of generating social and economic development and welfare, and secondly, these policymakers often do not fully understand SSE, in terms of its scope, forms and nature.

Not all societal problems are put on the policy or political agenda. Only certain problems recognized by or brought to the attention of people in and around government become the subject of policy and political discussions. And statistics or systematic indicators are one of the key elements constituting the process of problem recognition for policymakers. Despite their inevitable simplicity and bias, statistics provide quantitative accounts of a phenomenon, its evolution, as well as its relative contribution in solving the main problems faced by a government (e.g. unemployment, poverty, environment, economic growth, etc.). And this is the main challenge of SSE statistics today: to build these statistics and to build them in a rigorous and useful way.

The rigorous construction of statistics needs to address several issues that will be studied in this paper:

- 1) Why and for whom are SSE statistics important;
- 2) What kinds of statistics are needed;
- 3) Who should be involved in the production of SSE statistics;
- 4) Which policies need the support of SSE statistics.

The process of constructing SSE statistics is not without difficulties and limitations. Therefore, in addition to these four issues, the paper also analyzes the main obstacles to constructing SSE statistics, such as institutional, political, and economic barriers and technical and methodological obstacles and limitations (see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021). The first and perhaps main obstacle in the construction of SSE statistics is its very entry into the world of official statistics. This world uses national statistical standards in terms of definitions, concepts and methodologies. However, national statistical standards may be poorly adapted for what are still unstable concepts, such as SSE. Indeed, the very field of the SSE presents discursive and sometimes ideological tensions, in spite of the serious advances in defining its perimeter. Other concepts defining SSE in various ways do exist, contributing to increased ambiguity and controversy (Chaves and Monzón, 2018). They include social enterprises, solidarity economy and non-profit entities. All of these concepts, including that of SSE, have several definitions in different national settings, in terms of identifying the characteristics and the entities that are or are not in scope. This also blurs the boundaries of SSE from an international perspective. One could wonder what forces are at play in this situation, what agenda it could serve to prevent the progression of the statistical construction of the SSE field. In this context, we need to think about the political challenge of SSE statistics and about ways to put SSE on the political agenda.

Once the previous hurdle has been overcome, the main challenges in the construction of SSE statistics are, first of all, to capture the field of the SSE within the established statistical framework, with its official statistical language (e.g. international standards, satellite accounts, etc.), in order to make it visible and comprehensible with its own established tools. Once the SSE has been made visible and comprehensible within the existing official statistical framework, the next challenge is to innovatively develop new vocabulary and instruments of the statistical language in order to produce new indicators and methodologies.

The examination of those issues above will enable us to advance recommendations for governments that wish to build good SSE statistics. Finally, as research is very important for improving SSE statistics, this paper proposes tasks for future research.

This paper is based on the review of recommendations to policymakers and researchers for producing statistics on SSE made by experts from international agencies (e.g. ILO, UNDESA, UNSD, EC, EUROSTAT), national statistics offices (e.g. Brazil, Canada, France, Portugal, Romania, South Korea and Spain), SSE umbrella organizations (e.g. EESC, ICA, UNTFSE, Social Economy Europe) and academic entities (e.g. ADDES, CIRIEC, EURICSE, Johns Hopkins University). All these references appear at the end of the paper.

1 Why are SSE statistics important?

Why do statistics matter? And more specifically, why do we need statistics on the SSE? Statistics are essential in guiding policy processes, in order to make rational and evidence-based decisions. The World Bank stated, “In simple terms, statistics are the evidence on which policies are built. They help identify needs, set goals and monitor progress. Without good statistics, the development process is blind: policy-makers cannot learn from their mistakes and the public cannot hold them accountable” (World Bank, 2000:vii).

In particular, statistics are critical to making evidence-based *private and public assessments and decisions*. They provide valuable information for assessment and decisions to stakeholders such as policymakers at the different levels of government, leaders of private entities, representatives of interest groups, the media and researchers. Statistics are also a crucial input in the *policy-making cycle, which involves all the policy stakeholders*, from agenda setting, diagnosis of the issue, the choice of policy objectives and means, and, finally, the evaluation of the implemented public policies, in order to provide feedback for another policy cycle.

For policymakers, statistics are necessary to assess a problem or field and to evaluate whether or not to include it on the policy agenda. Statistics are needed to provide evidence in the identification of specific needs and issues and their evolution. Statistics are also necessary to adequately address the issues and choose both the general and specific objectives as well as the best tools. Finally, statistics are needed to monitor progress in policy implementation and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies in achieving objectives.

For SSE stakeholders, statistics are needed to persuade policymakers of the importance of an issue, field, or policy. Their aim is to “open policy windows” by putting an issue/field on the policy agenda. In this context, if statistical data are not provided by public bodies (such as national statistics offices and ministries), the umbrella organizations (such as joint platforms of cooperatives, social enterprises and voluntary organizations) have to create and provide

them to policymakers, the media and the society in question. Statistics are also important for SSE stakeholders to jointly participate with governments in the development and implementation of public policies, monitoring them for their private and public interests. Statistics are needed to track developments in their field - issues, policy, and investments - in order to develop plans and strategies of SSE stakeholders. Finally, SSE stakeholders need statistics in order to assess and report on policies.

For a society, statistics are significant in understanding the importance of social and economic issues. They give evidence-based information about policy fields and options, in order to create opinion and make collective choices. Finally, statistics are important for holding governments accountable and then changing, or not, public policies.

For researchers, statistics are essential data for their work and for their studies, whether they use academic, partnership-based, or participatory methodologies that involve public and private/SSE actors. Statistical data addresses the problems, avoiding mismatches, inaccuracies, etc.

In addition to the reasons explained above in the policy cycle framework, SSE statistics are important for five main *raisons*: identification, recognition, visibility of impact, measure of performance and comparisons.

Identification. Statistics contribute to institutionalizing the vision of the SSE in the social imaginary. In fact, they identify fields of social, economic and political action. Their figures and their technical language build a statistical narrative about these fields. To make these functions effective, the delimitation of the statistical perimeter of SSE must be pertinent, stable over time and methodologically operational. The statistical delimitation of the SSE must be deeply linked to the social, political and media recognition of the field. The vision and the language of the SSE field should be the same in the statistical, political, social and media languages. A major challenge is the delimitation of the perimeter of a field or an issue, in this case the Social and Solidarity Economy field. *The delimitation of the SSE perimeter is not always neutral. In fact, it is a political issue in itself.* The choice of the perimeter, i.e. the fields or types of entities that are within or outside the scope of statistics on the SSE, is a political decision that has important consequences in terms of public policies, external and internal recognition of the field, and research, among others.

Recognition. SSE statistics contribute to the recognition of the SSE sector by policymakers, society and SSE entities themselves. SSE statistics reveal the existence of a policy field, which must be the object of new public policies. And these new policies need new data and indicators to monitor and measure the evolution and the performance in the field and the policies deployed. SSE statistics have a qualitative importance in the framework of agenda setting. They are useful for the SSE as a new field to be considered by policymakers.

Visibility of the impact of the SSE. The SSE is an emerging sector at the national and international level that is a little-known economic field, not well represented in national statistics. SSE statistics contribute to making visible, in technical language, the importance of this sector, both in the economy and in society. SSE statistics reveal the quantitative and qualitative impact of the SSE in economic dimensions, such as its contribution to GDP, employment, the number of entities and value added, its presence in all economic activities, and in terms of membership, citizenship, volunteering and other non-market variables.

Measuring the performance of the SSE. SSE statistics help to assess SSE performance in different phenomena and its contribution to socioeconomic objectives, such as the SDGs. SSE statistics show, for instance, the resilience of this sector in times of crisis (its counter-cyclical activity in the face of the crisis), its higher relative contribution, compared to the for-profit sector, to the creation and maintenance of jobs, to the fight against inequality, social exclusion and hunger.¹ These statistics highlight the contributions of the SSE and are therefore useful to argue for and support new public policies to promote the SSE.

International, inter-temporal and inter-sectoral comparisons. Good SSE statistics are useful for making comparisons between different countries and regions, from year to year and between different economic sectors. They help to assess the development of the SSE, the strategies developed by the SSE sector in regions and industries and to assess the impact of public policies, on the one hand, and compare these with those of other economic entities, on the other.

The usefulness of SSE statistics has been recognized by several international bodies in recent years, such as the United Nations, as well as multiple countries. In particular, the creation of statistical systems and satellite accounts for the Social and Solidarity Economy has received strong political support from them as we can see below.

UNRISD, ILO and UNTFSSSE, of the United Nations, have organized specialized seminars in this context. In Geneva, 3–4 June 2019, UNRISD organized an International Conference on *Measuring and Reporting Sustainability Performance: Are Corporations and SSE Organizations Meeting the SDG Challenge?* which included a special session on “Review of Impact Indicators: Perspectives and Methodologies from Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations and Enterprises.” The UNTFSSSE, in collaboration with UNRISD, ICA, CIRIEC and Social Economy Europe, organized on 4 November 2019 an expert workshop on the topic of “Opportunities and Challenges of Statistics on the Social and Solidarity Economy,” held in the European Economic and Social Committee’s office, in Brussels. There was also a session organized by GSEF and UNRISD during the session of the 2020 GSEF Global Virtual Forum on the theme of Sustainable Development Performance Indicators, on the 21st of October, 2020.

Around the world, many governments have made explicit the need for rigorous statistics on the social economy.² Several of these have made the construction of SSE statistics an objective of their national SSE development strategies and have even included them in their SSE laws and bills. In South America, Ecuador and Uruguay are two cases in point. One of the main lines of action of the *Public Policy Plan for SSE (2021-2025)* of the government of the Republic of Ecuador³ is “Generation of knowledge: generation of data on the SSE.” This line states, “To promote the creation and dissemination of a satellite account for the SSE that quantifies the size of this sector, its contribution to gross domestic product, its impact on job creation, among other variables. To create, together with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, a reporting and dissemination system of the contribution of SSE enterprises to the achievement of the SDG, on the basis of the SSE Satellite Account and the National Information System of the SSE.” The recent Uruguayan Law on SSE⁴ (Article 12.h) also urges

¹ See, for instance, the work carried out in Spain by Castro et al. (2020).

² In this paper, social economy and social and solidarity economy are used interchangeably.

³ Republic of Ecuador (2020): *Public Policy Plan for SSE (2021-2025)*, https://www.mtss.go.cr/elministerio/despacho/politica_ESS.pdf.

⁴ See Oriental Republic of Uruguay (2020). *Ley n° 19.848 de Economía social y solidaria* <https://legislativo.parlamento.gub.uy/temporales/docu6743057981746.htm>.

government to create an SSE Observatory within the framework of INACOOP's Statistics and Information Unit. The Mexican government is also interested in developing Social Economy Satellite Accounts. Through an agreement between INAES (National Institute for the Social Economy) and Mexico's NSO, SSE statistics have recently been developed (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía de México, 2018).

In Africa, exemplary cases are Tunisia and Morocco, the most advanced countries in the region in terms of the development of strategies and laws.⁵ The Tunisian SSE Strategy report published by the Tunisian government and UNDP *Étude Stratégique sur l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire en Tunisie* (2017) indicates the following:

"There is a lack of reliable data. The SSE lacks a statistical system that produces accurate and reliable data. The data available in the supervisory institutions are nonsensical, incomplete and inconsistent. In the absence of a statistical system, the government is unable to develop public policies in this area. We encountered enormous difficulties in measuring the sector's contribution to wealth and employment creation. The statistical invisibility of SSE is a consequence of the lack of an integrated satellite account within the National Statistical System. This satellite account constitutes the first step for the visibility of the sector and the deepening of the analyses on the dynamics of each of the SSE sectors" (Haddar et al, 2017:18).

One of the main pillars of the Tunisian SSE Strategy, therefore, is to build a statistical system, which includes 3 measures: (1) Establishment of an SSE satellite account that is consistent with the System of National Accounts; (2) Establishment of a National Directory of Associations developed by its National Statistics Office; and (3) Creation of a database covering all SSE actors.

Morocco also prioritizes the creation of SSE statistics. Both its National Strategy for the Social and Solidarity Economy (2010-2020) and the draft framework law on the SSE reflect this need for statistics and mandate the governments to implement them.⁶ Axis 7 of the Strategy states that "[d]eveloping statistical information on the social and solidarity economy sector to better understand the dynamics of the sector, its economic performance and its contribution to economic and social development" is needed. The draft bill also stipulates that to ensure the analysis and monitoring of the development of the SSE, the High Commissioner for the Moroccan Plan will set up a statistical information system. This system will be structured by means of a satellite account of the SSE within the national statistical system and will be fed by a central register of Moroccan SSE organizations. In order to keep the data of the SSE organizations up to date, they have to provide their reports (statistical data of their annual report) on a regular basis."

In Europe, several European institutions have highlighted this need. The first is the *European Parliament*, which calls for the creation and development of SSE statistics in its Report on the

⁵ Tunisia is the first African country to pass a law on the social and solidarity economy (Loi n° 2020-30 du 30 juin 2020, relative à l'économie sociale et solidaire).

⁶ Ministre Délégué auprès du Chef du Gouvernement (Maroc), Chargé des Affaires Économiques et Générales. 2011. *Stratégie Nationale de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire 2010-2020*. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/mor151424.pdf>; Abdelkrim Azenfar. 2019. "Proyecto de Ley Marco de la economía social y solidaria en Marruecos". *Mediterráneo económico*, 32: 321-341. <https://www.publicacionescajamar.es/publicacionescajamar/public/pdf/publicaciones-periodicas/mediterraneo-economico/32/26.pdf>

Social Economy (named “Toia Report,” European Parliament (2009)). This Report “calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the creation of national statistical registers for social economy enterprises, to establish national satellite accounts for each institutional sector and branch of activity and allow for this data to be included in Eurostat, also by making use of competences available in universities.” Such efforts could be supported by creating a statistical register of social economy companies in each EU Member State, establishing satellite accounts for social economy enterprises by institutional sector and branch of activity in each Member State and enabling such data to be input into the Eurostat system of European statistics” (European Parliament, 2009:8-14).

The second European institution highlighting the need for SSE statistics is the *European Commission*, as evidenced in its Communication on “Social Business Initiative: Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation.” In Section “3.2.1. Developing tools to gain a better understanding of the sector and increase the visibility of social entrepreneurship” it is stated that “One of the things all stakeholders say they need is simple and fast access to the available information concerning social enterprises, enabling discussion in order to share the best practices. In particular, this concerns the need to have ways of assessing and evaluating the impact and social performance of these activities (e.g. by using the experience of Member States that have set up satellite accounts to gather statistics on social enterprises, in particular cooperatives and mutual societies)” (European Commission, 2011:8).

The third institution is the *Council of the European Union*. In its official statement on 7 December 2015, “The promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe - Council Conclusions” (point 19), it invites the Member States and the Commission to “make efforts to further document the effective contribution of the social economy to the major macro-economic aggregates. As all policies should be evidence-based, Eurostat and national statistics offices should consider developing and implementing satellite accounts in their respective statistics aimed at establishing the effective contribution of the social economy to economic growth and social cohesion in the European Union” (Council of the EU, 2015:6).

The fourth institution that supports the need for statistics and satellite accounts for the social economy is the *Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship (GECES)*, now named Commission Expert Groups on Social Economy and Social Enterprises.⁷ Its report of October 2016, entitled “Social enterprises and the social economy going forward,” included as the first recommendation, “to encourage the Commission and the Member States to collect systematic data on the economic and social importance and dynamics of social enterprises. This should include a double dynamic: on the one hand, the progressive incorporation of social enterprises⁸ within national satellite accounts for the social economy where they exist and, on the other hand, encouraging the creation of satellite accounts on the social economy by national statistics offices where they do not exist yet. The Commission (Eurostat) should include this data in EU-level comparisons” (GECES, 2016:19).

Finally, *many European countries* also support this statistical task. Given the absence of a European statistical framework for the collection and publication of satellite accounts of the

⁷ GECES (2016) https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises/expert-groups_en

⁸ In this Report, and more precisely in its Recommendation, we can find an explicit example of terms and concepts that are blurring the field of the SE, as indicated in the Introduction.

social economy, eleven European countries in May 2017 supported a request to develop a specific satellite account in the *Madrid Declaration*.⁹ Along the same line, in October 2018, in Luxembourg, during a meeting of the Ministers of Work and Employment that took place within the framework of the Monitoring Committee of the Luxembourg Declaration of 2015, a number of EU country delegates expressed a strong interest in developing a satellite account for the social economy for their country.

2 Which SSE statistics are needed?

The official statements mentioned in the former section not only highlight the reasons why statistics on the SSE are needed, but also reveal what kind of statistics policymakers demand.

Ecuador calls for statistics that quantify the size of the SSE sector, its contribution to GDP and the achievement of the SDGs and its impact on job creation. Tunisia calls for statistics quantifying the contribution of the SSE to wealth and employment creation and assessing the dynamics of different types of SSE. Morocco wants statistics on the dynamics of the SSE sector, its economic performance and its contribution to economic and social development. Tunisia, Ecuador and Morocco need these statistics to be provided through a satellite account for the SSE, while Uruguay does so through an SSE Observatory.

In Europe, the European Parliament calls for statistics that measure the economic growth of the SSE sector from a qualitative and quantitative point of view and the employment it generates. And it also calls for the use multiplier applied to the official statistics¹⁰ and an indicator-bundling method.¹¹ These two methods, i.e. multiplier and bundled indicators, increase the degree of objectivity of the performance measurement of social economy entities vis-a-vis conventional for-profit entities (European Parliament, 2009:8-14). The Council of the European Union also calls for statistics that document the effective contribution of the social economy to the major macro-economic aggregates -economic growth and social cohesion in the European Union- through satellite accounts (Council of the EU, 2015:6). The Group of Expert GECES calls for statistical data on the economic and social importance and dynamics of social enterprises. All of them need these statistics to be provided through national satellite accounts for the social economy.

In accordance with the rationale for the development of SSE statistics and the official government statements explained above, the types of SSE statistics to be provided are as follows:

1. General statistics on the economic and social size and scope of the SSE in the economy as a whole (value added, paid and non-paid workers, and number of entities and members);¹²

⁹ The countries are Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, Romania, Portugal, Malta, Luxembourg, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria, see <http://www.observatorioeconomiasocial.es/actualidad-observatorio.php?id=3645>.

¹⁰ Multiplier is used to measure the direct, indirect and induced impacts or total change throughout the economy from one unit change for a given sector. Source: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---coop/documents/publication/wcms_760710.pdf

¹¹ A bundled-indicator or indicator bundling method is used when an individual indicator alone might not adequately depict the condition or level of a particular measurement area. It creates an indicative list of uncorrelated indicators, usually using a statistical method such as principal component analysis. In the context of SSE statistics, the use of bundled method source: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/coin/10-step-guide/step-6>.

¹² The Bouchard (2020) recent study has highlighted limitations with respect to referring to the notion of added-value for the SSE (see chapter by Rousselière, Bouchard and LeGuernic, 2020).

2. Statistics that highlight the impact of the social economy on the main macroeconomic aggregates (share in GDP, investment, employment, exportations);¹³
3. Statistics that reveal the contribution of the social economy to each sector of economic activity (agriculture, building industry, services, etc.) and, by a geographical perspective, for each region of the country;
4. Statistics that highlight the contribution of each subtype of the SSE¹⁴ to the economy and to the different economic sectors;
5. Statistics that show the impact of the SSE on general public policy targets, such as economic growth, quality of employment and social cohesion, and on specific targets such as the indicators of the United Nations SDGs, especially job creation, poverty reduction, resources mobilization and investment generation;
6. Statistics which highlight the economic performance and the growth or decline of SSE over defined periods, showing the specificities of the sector, such as its counter-cyclical activity in the face of crisis;
7. Statistics that help policymakers to assess and evaluate the impact and social performance of the SSE. These statistics should reveal the ‘broadened production’ (Mertens and Marée, 2015) of the SSE, i.e. externalities and non-monetary impacts.

Statistics that help policymakers to compare SSE statistics between different countries, as there is a wide range of national experiences with the SSE.

3 Which entities should be involved in the production of SSE statistics?

In order to have good SSE statistics, which means *reliable, accurate, relevant, clear and accessible* data, both the technical process of production of statistics and the producers of statistics are important.

Five types of entities are involved as producers of SSE statistics: national statistical offices (NSOs), government departments and agencies, SSE representative (umbrella) organizations, universities and other research centres, and finally development agencies and other non-state entities promoting the SSE (see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021).

National statistics offices: According to UNECE (2018)¹⁵ and Carini, Borzaga and Carpita (2018), official statistics coming from NSOs have several advantages compared to other sources of data: (1) They are built in accordance with ethical and professional principles, such as the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which limit them to not be vested interests and are bound by a strict professional duty of impartiality; (2) They are produced based on open methodologies and internationally recognized standards, making them internationally comparable ; (3) They are transparent so that users can assess their

¹³ As GDP is an aggregate of value-added, the problems mentioned in ILO (2020) also apply there.

¹⁴ A challenge is the identification of the main subtypes of the SSE. The studies of CIRIEC-Spain, for instance, differentiate between the Market Producers of the Social Economy –mainly cooperatives- and the Non-Market Producers of the Social Economy –mainly associations and other voluntary organizations- (see Instituto Nacional de Estadística and CIRIEC-España, 2013).

¹⁵ UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2018): Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics, Geneva: United Nations.

accuracy and reliability; (4) They are strictly based on evidence drawn from survey and/or administrative data sources, which are larger in scale than most non-official statistics. They are conducted and resourced on the basis of national needs rather than private business interests.

At present however, NSOs have, in general, little interest in producing and analyzing SSE statistics, and when they do have, these are poorly adapted to the demands of the SSE representative platforms. This may change if, by general legislative mandate, they are obliged to produce this type of statistics, as is the case in Portugal, stated in Article 6 of the Social Economy Act (2013) or Tunisia, stated in Article 12 of the Social and Solidarity Act (2020), or if this obligation to produce SSE statistics is established in the countries' official statistical plans. The other problem may stem from the inadequate training of the technicians of the NSOs in the field of the SSE and its peculiarities, as well as from the demand for specific statistics that the SSE sector needs.

Government departments and agencies: Many government ministries and agencies produce data on the SSE as a whole, on SSE subtypes such as cooperatives, associations and others, or on specific policy areas that affect the SSE or its subsectors, such as labour policy, agricultural policy or social policy. These bodies usually maintain databases and produce specific studies and statistics. An advantage of the government agencies, compared to NSOs, is that they have a more in-depth knowledge of the SSE sector, which is important for producing statistics that consider sector-specific dimensions of the SSE (such as voluntary work and other non-monetary impacts). However, the methodologies used for such data collection and analysis, as well as the SSE (sub)types included in those specific studies, are often inappropriate or incomplete for cross-sectoral and international studies and comparisons. Mostly, statistics containing complete and comprehensive data about the SSE as a whole or about its subtypes are still not common. In fact, they may not be available at all.

Representative SSE umbrella organizations: in contexts where there is a lack of official statistics, from the NSO or government ministries, umbrella organizations¹⁶ tend to produce their own statistics, for their internal strategies or for their advocacy activities. These entities have the advantage of having a good knowledge of the sector, its issues, trends and challenges, and of having a direct relationship with the SSE grassroots entities, which greatly facilitates their data collection. However, they suffer from several weaknesses. Firstly, they have difficulties in mobilizing financial resources to produce statistics in cases where those statistics are not directly related to their activities or organizational mandates. Secondly, they often lack capacity and scientific rigor in data collection and analysis. And thirdly, the statistics they produce are often affected by vested interests as they come from entities representing the sector and therefore have biases in the interpretation of data and in the use of data.

Universities and other research centres: Many research centres and universities, such as CIRIEC or EURICSE, collect data and produce statistics on the SSE or on specific areas of the SSE, such as cooperatives or social enterprises. They are independent institutions that, in general, have the same advantages as the NSO, since they are impartial, respect ethical and professional principles, use internationally recognized methodologies and standards and are transparent. Because of these characteristics, they are more likely to be neutral and methodologically solid. The researchers who participate in these centres generally have a deep

¹⁶ For instance, the Spanish Social Economy Employers' Confederation (CEPES) produces its own statistics (see www.cep.es).

knowledge of the field of SSE, as they have long experience in conducting research focused on this field. They are often open to collaborating with the NSO in order to provide them with methodological skills and knowledge in the field. Examples can be found at the NSO *Québec Portrait statistique de l'économie sociale*,¹⁷ which has been assisted by experts from universities. However, university and other academic research centres have limitations, namely the lack of access to administrative data, lack of authority that NSOs or governments have over respondents to compel them to provide data or responses to a survey, a lack of resources or an interest in repeating the data collection to allow for temporal comparisons.

Development agencies and other non-government entities promoting SSE: Development agencies such as international organizations and donors and non-government organizations promoting and working with SSE organizations and enterprises are sometimes interested in measuring the impact of their interventions in order to justify mobilization and spending of resources and to adjust their strategies (Birchall, 2017). These entities often produce statistics focusing on the target field for which they are concerned, where they have ease of information access and interpretation, especially for funders and promoters. To produce these statistics, they involve experts in their own structures or contract universities or other research centres. Their advantage is that they have resources to produce quality statistics and hire experts to interpret them, and have easy access to information on the SSE. However, those agencies neither cover all the key aspects of the SSE sector nor do they always produce good quality statistics, which brings us to carefully examining the quality and coverage of statistics when using them for research and policymaking.

Statistics working group. As we have seen, the five producers of statistics have both strengths and weaknesses (see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021). In order to produce the best statistics efficiently and effectively, it is desirable to establish stable cooperation between these different producers and between producers and users. There are several ways of implementing this cooperation. The choice depends on the context and situation in each country. One option (Birchall, 2014; Carini et al., 2018) is to organize a working group, such as the COPAC Technical Working Group on Cooperative Statistics,¹⁸ which includes experts from the NSOs, representatives of government agencies, representative SSE entities and university researchers, in order to exchange information, provide expertise, assess the adequacy of official data with regard to users' needs, propose solutions to fill these gaps, promote in-depth analysis of the resulting data, and suggest general improvements to statistics.

4 Main barriers in producing SSE statistics

Building SSE statistics is possible and desirable. But this process has several obstacles, observed in many countries, which must be recognized and overcome.

The obstacles include: technical, institutional, economic, educational and political barriers. To a large extent, these obstacles are related to and reinforce each other. A worst-case scenario for the production of SSE statistics would be one in which all these barriers converge, a

¹⁷ See page 7 of the *Portrait statistique 2016. L'économie sociale au Québec* (Institut de la Statistique du Québec, 2019), the acknowledgment of university experts for their collaboration (<https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/fichier/economie-sociale-au-quebec-portrait-statistique-2016.pdf>).

¹⁸ Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) Technical Working Group on Statistics of Cooperatives, https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/news/WCMS_554327/lang-en/index.htm

scenario that presents an absence of political interest and of representative organizations that support the construction of SSE statistics. This situation translates into a lack of mobilization of funds for these purposes and a lack of development of norms that condition or even force administrations and official statistics institutes to produce this type of statistics. Therefore, no databases will be generated in this field, nor will research be carried out that can generate methodologies and techniques necessary for these statistics, nor will specialized technicians be trained in the production of these statistics.

4.1 Technical barriers

Technical barriers can be found in four stages of the construction process of SSE statistics:

Stage 1. Definition and delimitation of the object of statistical analysis

This step presents two major challenges. The first is to build an agreement on the scope of the SSE field. In other words, it requires a decision on which types of entities and activities are considered to be in-scope and out-of-scope of the SSE field. Probably the main obstacle is not reaching the necessary scientific, political and social consensus regarding the delimitation or perimeter of this field at national and international levels. Lack of consensus on the SSE scope, which enables cross-sectoral and international comparisons, hampers progress in the SSE statistical process. Keeping the scientific processes of delimitation of SSE strictly separate might help policymakers at the national level understand which entities are in-scope or out-of-scope. Once national agreements on the perimeter of the SSE have been reached, it is necessary to institutionalize it by making it a statistical standard or incorporating it into an official document, such as into legislation, so that it becomes a reference for administrations and statistical institutes. Including it in a Social and Solidarity Economy Law is an ideal option in this respect.

The second challenge concerns the definition and operationalization of the variables for which analysis in the context of SSE requires details based on scientific method. An example is the definition of the work-related variables, such as paid, indirect or voluntary work and how to measure it.¹⁹ This again requires a consensus, mainly scientific, and an institutionalization in standards or official documents. In order to be comparable, the standards used for SSE should be the same as for non-SSE enterprises. One obstacle in this regard is the choice of variables that are not comparable, because they are not properly defined or because they do not follow national or international standards.

Although international standards on SSE statistics, such as the CIRIEC Manual of Satellite Accounts for Cooperatives and Mutual Societies (Social Economy) (2008), the United Nations' Satellite Account on Nonprofit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work (2018), the ILO Measuring Informality: Statistical Manual on the Informal Sector and Informal Employment (2013) and the ILO Guidelines Concerning Statistics on Cooperatives (2018), facilitate this definition and delimitation process, they have different statistical definitions and scope of SSE, and do not have comparability,²⁰ as is the case between the referenced CIRIEC and the UN manuals for satellite accounts.

The active participation of experts from universities or other research centres that share the same ambition for a scientific method to produce comparable statistics can help to reach

¹⁹ See Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives (ILO 2018) and also chapter by Eum in ILO (2020).

²⁰ See also Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu (2020).

these agreements on the scope of SSE. However, there is also a risk that there will be no consensus among them regarding the interpretation of the criteria of the perimeter.

Stage 2. Building a system of SSE raw data sources²¹

Once the field and the variables for statistical analysis have been defined, the next phase is to build a primary data collection system (raw data). There are several methods of data collection: an administrative database, a census, a survey, etc. (see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021). The quality of the data generated is subject to the fulfilment of three criteria: (1) whether the data are sufficiently broad - in a complete and exhaustive way -, that is, whether the data cover all SSE types of entities, (2) whether data are regularly updated, and (3) whether data are systematically processed and organized to avoid double counting and the inclusion of false and inactive entities. The greatest risk or obstacle in this regard is being unable to build an effective information collection system that generates quality raw data.

If the raw data generated does not meet these quality criteria, it will suffer from problems of reliability, availability, comparability and update, which will result in poor quality statistics.

Stage 3. Raw data processing and methodology to generate SSE statistics.

Raw data must be processed and classified according to standardized methodologies in order to produce relevant statistics and indicators. These statistics and indicators must be comparable in 4 dimensions: (1) inter-temporal, (2) inter-sectoral (between the different sectors of economic activity, as in the case of National Classification of Economic Activities (NACE), (3) inter-company (between the different legal forms of enterprises) and (4) international. For example, the methodology of the satellite accounts allows comparisons in multiple dimensions.

A major obstacle in this phase is the lack of knowledge on SSE and its activities among NSOs and other producers of statistics of the standardized methodologies, the dissent in their interpretation and application in the specific case of the country of reference, as well as the use of other non-standardized methodologies that result in an inability to compare.

Stage 4. Publication and dissemination of statistics

The last phase of the process consists in disseminating, making accessible and interpreting the SSE statistics produced. SSE statistics need to be published, made accessible and to correspond to the interest and need of the users of SSE statistics: policy-makers, the umbrella organizations of SSE entities, media, civil society, SSE investors, private entities promoting the SSE, and researchers. Statistical portals such as the Belgian *Observatoire de l'économie sociale*²² are also more easily updatable and user-friendly, as they make it easier for users to access and view the desired information.²³ Also, infographics, as a way to present statistics, are more understandable for users with little statistical knowledge than are complicated statistical reports. The risks in this respect are the lack of clarity of the statistics and their indicators, the lack of timeliness and updating of the data, the gap between offered information and needed information and, finally, the difficulty in finding them (findability), sometimes due to the lack of their publication (on paper or on the internet).

²¹ See also Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu (2020).

²² See <https://observatoire-es.be/>

²³ For more information see Compère, Coline, Barbara Sak and Jérôme Schoenmaeckers (2021).

4.2 Training barriers

The production of SSE statistics requires qualified staff knowledgeable in SSE and statistical skills, well trained both in statistical techniques (e.g. techniques needed to construct satellite accounts) and in the field of SSE (in order to precisely define the statistical scope). Statistical institutes may lack this qualified staff, so it will be necessary to have the political will to recruit specialists and sign agreements with universities and research centers, in order to provide skills directly and to develop specialized training actions for groups of technical staff.

4.3 Political barriers

Even if the technical and training barriers to the construction of SSE statistics are overcome, other barriers may prevent or hinder the production of these statistics. These barriers may be institutional, financial, or political (e.g. the lack of political support from the SSE sector and/or the government). The prioritization of SSE statistics in the political agenda and a government's support for it can help overcome financial and institutional barriers.

4.4 Institutional barriers

Absence of a regulatory framework is one of the major institutional barriers. The regulatory barriers refer to the lack of standards defining the statistical scope. No standards mean that there won't be a mechanism of responsible government body to impel or regulate the construction of statistics. In short, it refers to the degree of institutionalization of the statistical production process by the NSOs and the institutionalization of the object of the statistics.

Since the capture of a statistical field benefits from prior regulation, with specific legal forms, those countries that do not have a regulation with regard to the SSE or have an incomplete or deficient regulation will have problems in apprehending this field. A legal definition is therefore very helpful prior to the statistical capture, all of which depends on the political will to establish this legal framework (see Jenkins et al., 2021). As the SSE includes different legal forms of organizations, the norm can also establish a catalogue of Social and Solidarity Economy entities (or subtypes), facilitating the delimitation of the field.

A second institutional barrier is the deficiency of government plans that mandate the statistical institutes to produce statistics on the SSE, what kind of statistics, what variables and what field are addressed. These government plans may require the regular provision of statistics (e.g. in Portugal). When standards that condition the production of statistics do not exist, agreements between these statistical institutes and other entities (universities, research centers, government agencies and ministries) that provide guidance for the construction of statistics can play a significant role in producing statistics. The existence of SSE statistical plans is obviously subject to the political will of policymakers. Statements of bodies such as the European institutions referred to in Section 2 are no more than recommendations to governments and the European Commission, without any coercive capacity.

4.5 Financial barriers

Insufficient financial resources are also a barrier to producing statistics. The construction of statistics requires financial means, both for the recruitment of qualified staff and for computer equipment, databases and software. NSOs, however, often suffer from a lack of financial resources. Their meagre budget often limits the production of statistics to those mandated by

government and/or by agreement with supranational institutions where appropriate. This is the case, for example, of the Spanish NSO, which limits its statistics to those commissioned by EUROSTAT and the national government. The government may condition politically that SSE statistics be included in the list of minimum statistics. However, the scope of statistics that completely cover the diverse forms or subtypes of SSE organizations and enterprises is usually bigger than a required scope set by the government or supranational governing bodies and demands more funds. The political prioritization of SSE statistics will, in this sense, imply the allocation of additional resources for this endeavor. Another alternative funding channel can be from supranational institutions and philanthropic funding.

4.6 Lack of policy support from the SSE sector

The insufficient attention or support of the SSE sector for the construction of SSE statistics is also a barrier. The political will of governments to support the production of SSE statistics is often shaped by demands, impulses and pressures from the SSE sector itself. The construction of SSE statistics in the policy agenda may be relegated in the absence or weak capacity of advocacy work by organizations representing the SSE sector. This lack of prioritization in the policy agenda will contribute to a lack of momentum in the development of these statistics. This weakness can be a particular concern in contexts such as that outlined in the introduction, where the field and concept of SSE are being questioned and blurred, contributing to the paralysis of the political will of governments in relation to the construction of SSE statistics.

5 What policies may SSE statistics support?

Two key objectives of this paper were to help policymakers better understand the SSE through information on mapping exercises on SSE and to provide information to practitioners and researchers with an interest in creating mappings of SSE. In view of those objectives, we have introduced the key trends and landscapes of mapping exercises on SSE and explained the opportunities, benefits and challenges of SSE from the perspective of mapping exercises.

Statistics on SSE are a fundamental tool for policymakers for the legitimization, design and implementation of two types of policies: SSE policies specifically aimed at socio-economic reality and policies in sectoral, functional, redistributive, territorial and environmental dimensions.

In the field of SSE policies, the statistics on SSE are first and foremost a key instrument for communicating, making visible and legitimizing this policy. The publication of statistics that reveal the size and impact of the SSE on the economy and society gives official recognition to this sector and therefore to this field of public policy, which becomes more important than ever in recent times. SSE statistics based on widely accepted scientific statistical methodology helps capture the SSE sector and make it visible. They further legitimize the incorporation of the SSE into the political agenda, both in the government general public policy and in its specific policies. They also emphasize the fact that the representatives of the SSE are public actors who are interlocutors in the civil dialogue. In turn, SSE statistics contribute to strengthening the concept and reducing the “noise” made by competing concepts. However, a too narrowly defined concept of SSE will be subject to disputes, while a too broad one will not capture a reality that is distinctive from the rest of the “responsible” economy.

Secondly, SSE statistics allow for assessing the scope of the SSE in a country and thus contributing to a better design of SSE development policies. Thirdly, SSE statistics also allow for evaluating the evolution of the SSE and the impact of these policies. These statistics will thus contribute to assessing which are the best instruments for the development of the SSE, information that is useful not only for policymakers but also for the representatives of the umbrella organizations.

Statistics on SSE are also important in the framework of sectoral, functional, redistributive, territorial and environmental policies. First of all, SSE statistics provide insight into the quantitative importance of the SSE in the fields of these different policies. Knowing its importance is fundamental for the correct design of these policies, giving an adequate space to the SSE within them.

Among the sectoral policies where statistical SSE are necessary we find:

1. The agri-food policy, where agricultural cooperatives and other rural associations play a key role;
2. The financial policy, where cooperative credit and ethical and alternative finances play an important role;
3. The social and health services policy, where social cooperatives and other non-profit organizations of social interest are the main agents;
4. The educational and cultural policy, where educational cooperatives and cultural and creative associations play a great role;
5. The social security policy, where the mutual benefit societies have a great market share.

Among the functional policies where statistical SSE are necessary we find:

- 1) The labor policy, with special attention to particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, young people, immigrants and women, in which social enterprises and labor cooperatives play an important role;
- 2) The technology and digitalization policy, where cooperative platforms play an innovative role;
- 3) The social policy: the policies of a redistributive nature where statistical SSE are necessary include social policies to address problems of inequality and poverty, where many associations and NGOs are very active;
- 4) The local and territorial development policy and environmental protection and ecological transition policy. Two other relevant policies where the role of the SSE must be considered and measured through statistics are the local and territorial development policy and the environmental protection and ecological transition policy, in which energy, agricultural and consumer cooperatives are active.

Secondly, within the framework of these general policies, statistics on SSE can help compare the performance and impact between for-profit enterprises and SSE entities. It also allows for assessing the evolution of the SSE in these policy areas.

6 Policy recommendations to build good SSE statistics

For countries to create and develop SSE statistics in a systematic manner, the following recommendations can be provided:

1. Regulatory frameworks and details should be included in authoritative or legal documents such as laws, plans, strategies and agreements between the NSO and other relevant organizations developing SSE statistics;
2. Adequate and stable funding for research, creation and development of SSE statistics, preferably from the public sector, should be budgeted and provided to the relevant agencies working on SSE statistics;
3. Setting up co-production of SSE statistics led by a working group composed of government bodies dealing with statistics or the NSO, experts from non-governmental bodies such as the universities and research institutes and users of statistics (government agencies and SSE umbrella organizations) is desirable;
4. Stable mechanisms of coordination, training and exchange of knowledge among working groups, the producers and the users, must be set up. Issues on boundaries of the SSE field, variables and indicators to be used and quantification and aggregation methodologies should be addressed at levels that have the power to establish regulatory frameworks (e.g. SSE legislation) such as the supranational, national or subnational level;
5. Methodologies and guidelines to delimit the concrete perimeter of the SSE in a country, to specify the variables and indicators and the methodologies of classification and aggregation, coherent with international standards, must be developed. With regard to funds, institutional and material resources available and the guidelines for the perimeter of the SSE, each country has to build its own SSE statistic strategy;
6. The establishment of observatories of statistics, surveys and censuses is recommended, to make a diagnosis of the state of statistics in the country, including the strengths and weaknesses of SSE statistics. At an early stage, this observatory undertakes diagnoses of the sources and the quality of the raw data from different types of sources. They are international surveys (such as the European Social Survey), databases in ministries, international surveys, databases in umbrella and other apex entities and databases in universities;
7. Setting up a raw statistical database of SSE entities is needed. There are several ways to set up the database. One option is to build it from checking the existing databases of the ministries responsible for finance, labour and social security. Since these databases contain information on tax and social security codes, which are useful for identifying diverse economic entities, they can be used as a basis for a raw statistical database for SSE entities. A second option is to build it from the databases of scientific entities and apex-umbrella organizations, which may contain information on SSE entities;
8. Regular production of statistics in a harmonized way according to international standards is essential for the development of statistics on SSE;

9. Regular publication and dissemination of results that are easily accessible and understandable to users is necessary. The results should be as disaggregated and granular as possible and published and disseminated in a timely manner.

7 Future research and actions in order to improve SSE statistics

As indicated throughout this paper, there are different areas in the production of SSE statistics that need technical development and refinement. In this sense, scientific research can play an important role in contributing to the production of SSE statistics. Suggestions for the areas of future research to improve SSE statistics include:

1. To create methodologies and guidelines to address perimeter issues, that is, to delimit the perimeter of the SSE and its internal, external and blurred frontiers. External frontiers refers to other sectors, such as the for-profit and public sector. Blurred frontiers refers to concepts whose field overlaps with that of the SSE, such as those of the non-profit sector, the solidarity economy, social entrepreneurship and volunteering. Internal frontiers refers to the families of the SSE subtypes existing in a country. For the latter it is necessary to develop new classification and aggregation methodologies;²⁴
2. To analyze the different models of regulations that have been developed by different countries to enable the construction of SSE statistics, i.e. articles in SSE laws referring to SSE statistics, a specific section for the construction of SSE statistics in national statistical plans, official agreements between governments and NSO and/or universities, and to determine which of these have been most effective in leading governments and their agencies to the construction of SSE statistics;
3. To develop models of governance of the SSE statistics producers and users to make the process of production of statistics more efficient. To improve the ways for exchanging information and learning together about SSE statistics;
4. To improve methodologies for the systematic collection and organization of SSE statistical information. Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu (2021) explain the different approaches to gather and systematize this information. Progress is needed to compare which approaches are the most effective and for which objectives, according to the resources available, and how to improve these. One option is to build and systematize raw ESS databases. This is necessary because the French SIRENE or the Spanish DIRCE, for example, are incomplete in considering the whole SSE. It is necessary to improve how to catch hidden SSE subtypes, clean the databases, eliminate double counting, inactive and false entities and techniques that can aggregate and coherently intersect different data sources (e.g. from ministries of labor, social affairs, social security, finance, etc.);
5. To develop variables (indicators) for the assessment of values and performance of the SSE and visualization of its idiosyncrasy. Key research concerns the identification and assessment of the multiple social and economic impacts of the SSE in the area of "work and employment." In this regard, it is useful to consider and measure the

²⁴ For an overview of recent studies addressing these SSE perimeter issues, see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu (2021), Chaves and Monzón (2018) and Salamon and Sokolowski (2016).

four dimensions of work mobilized by the SSE: direct, indirect, induced and voluntary work (see Bouchard and Salathé-Beaulieu, 2021);

6. To develop mechanisms of performance and impact comparison between the SSE entities and other forms of business;
7. To identify the different ways of publishing statistics and assessing the most effective ones in order to make them cheaper, easily accessible and understandable for users, at as much a disaggregated or granular level as possible and in a timely manner (see Section 5, stage 4 of this paper).

8 Conclusion

SSE statistics have been the subject of increasing interest of many governments around the world since the last decade. Many countries have already developed national strategies for SSE statistics. This document provides guidance to governments interested in developing SSE statistics in their country.

Firstly, it has detailed the reasons why governments as well as SSE actors are interested in producing SSE statistics. Among the main reasons are to make visible and legitimate the SSE as a new field of public action, to contribute to a better design, implementation and evaluation of policies aimed at promoting the SSE, as well as to provide tools to assess the SSE impact on public policy objectives. SSE statistics are therefore particularly useful for two groups of public policies: on the one hand, policies aimed at promoting the SSE and, on the other hand, government policies, mainly those which are sectoral, functional, territorial, environmental and redistributive, which seek to enhance the contribution of the SSE for the achievement of specific objectives.

This paper has identified the main types of SSE statistics that are needed and should be generated. If statistics are not neutral and hence do not speak for themselves, the scope, variables and indicators of reality captured by statistics should be defined and agreed upon by users and producers with diverse values and principles. In the case of SSE statistics, these include but are not limited to: umbrella organizations of SSE entities, researchers and policymakers. SSE statistics can be categorized into three types. The first type are quantitative economic statistics on the SSE within the framework of the conventional economic aggregates and the standard methodologies, such as the share in GDP, investment and employment using a satellite account. The second type are statistics allowing the quantification of the social and economic performance or impact of SSE, which are not easily captured by mainstream economic approaches or methods. The third type are statistics allowing comparisons at different levels such as international, intersectoral, intra-sectoral levels and between SSE and other economic entities such as for-profit entities. This type of statistics particularly requires the availability of rigorous and standardized methodologies.

The generation of these statistics should not be the exclusive task of national statistics offices, although they should play a leading role. There are other producers of statistics, such as universities and research centers, as well as umbrella organizations. Each of these has its strengths and weaknesses, so the best alternative is to establish stable collaboration among all of them.

The production of SSE statistics is not free of various obstacles. The main ones are the technical, institutional and financial capacity of the organizations that have to produce these statistics and finally the social demand for this type of statistics. Another obstacle are the tensions for blurring the SSE field and related concepts, such as social enterprises and non-profit entities, which tend to fragment this conceptual field and, with it, its statistical construction. The lack of funding to carry out this statistical process is in itself another difficult barrier to overcome. To explore and study the different modalities of funding for the production of SSE statistics is a challenge for the future. Another, and not minor, problem is the absence of a regulatory mandate, framed in a law or in a government plan, for statistical development that drives governments and statistical institutes to carry out this statistical endeavour.

This paper provides concrete recommendations to policymakers interested in the development of SSE statistics. These recommendations include the need to establish an adequate institutional framework, the provision of sufficient funds, the activation of a specialized team of experts, possibly in the form of a network group between a statistical institute and other producers of statistics, the generation of specialized databases and data collection systems managed efficiently and, finally, the adaptation of the methodology for the generation of statistics to international standards, although adapted to the needs of each specific country.

Finally, areas of further research have been identified for future investigations. These would focus on guidelines to improve the process of capturing the SSE in the framework of conventional official statistics, of new variables and indicators that highlight the broadened impact and performance of the SSE on welfare increases, economic development and the SDGs, and of improvements in comparative methods and studies, especially between SSE entities and other forms of business enterprises. Such scientific improvements would contribute toward documenting the real worth of SSE in an increasingly rigorous and precise way.

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