



Social
Economy
4Ces

3.5. STATE OF THE ART REPORT FOR FRANCE

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL



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Part 1: STATE OF THE ART - FRANCE

1. SOCIAL ECONOMY IN FRANCE

Institutional context of social economy in the country

Social Economy is strongly institutionalised in France where it has a long tradition, and is a significant actor in the country's economy, accounting for 10% of employment (Fraisie et al, 2016). Social enterprise is not a notion that is used much in the country by comparison to other national contexts, rather the most commonly used concept is that of social and solidarity economy (SSE). Whilst the SSE has a long history in France that can be traced back to the 19th century, one factor that accounted for its renewed influence and institutionalisation recently was the adoption of a specific Law in 2014. This law defines the principles that bring different forms of 'social organisations' (e.g. cooperatives, association, mutual societies, 'solidarity enterprises') under the one banner of the social economy.

The strong institutionalisation of SE in France is reflected not just in terms of its legal status, but also in the various structures that have been developed to support it (European Commission, 2020). For example, the Ministry for Ecological and Solidarity Transition (responsible for SSE) has developed a portal, ESSpace (<http://www.esspace.fr/index.html>) that aims to bring together all the stakeholders of the SSE to valorise the sector, facilitate exchange and mutual help between the various actors, provide resources and support to set up, develop and finance social organisations or enterprises, provide a platform to search for employment or voluntary work opportunities within the SSE, and to raise awareness of the SSE among the general public. Another example of supportive institutional environment is The Labo de 'Economie Sociale et Solidaire' (<http://www.lelabo-ess.org/-l-economie-sociale-et-solidaire-ess-.html>), a think tank created in 2010 that aims to work collaboratively with all the actors of the SE to build a common framework and language that brings the sector together, as well as to develop and share solutions. A final example concerns university education which has been consolidated by a consortium of 30 French universities, the Réseau Interuniversitaire de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (RIUESS, <https://riuess.org/lassociation>), a network that promotes research and training in social economy in France. It lists 20 UG courses, 40 PG courses and 19 'other' courses.

Definition of social economy applied in the country context

The Social and Solidarity economy is defined by a set of common values and principles: social purpose, cooperation, local embeddedness, and democracy. The various descriptions of the SSE in France suggest that we could articulate it around two dimensions: the means deployed, and here there is emphasis is on democratic and participative management; and the ends pursued, here the emphasis is on the pursuit of social utility through community, locally embedded development that is respectful of people as well as of the environment (be it the creation of employment opportunities in local areas, the development of community activities, or sustainable development for example). This

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definition is quite open and inclusive in terms of the sort of organisations that can be considered part of the SSE. This inclusive definition is also reflected in the legal framework that defines the SSE.

Since the Law of 2014, the SSE in France benefits from a legal framework and definition. The law of 2014 opts for an inclusive definition and articulates the criteria of the social economy as follows: a purpose other than the distribution of profits, democratic governance, reinvestment of profits in the activity and compulsory asset lock. It therefore includes all associations, cooperatives, mutual organizations and foundations. In addition to these traditional legal forms of SSE, the law opens up the field of SSE to commercial companies whose economic activity has a social utility purpose (support to persons in a situation of fragility, fight against exclusion and inequalities, education in citizenship, sustainable development) and whose management meets the following criteria: the financial surpluses must be allocated in priority to the social mission and to compulsory reserves; the company's shares cannot be negotiated on capital markets; and an equitable wage policy (with a wage scale in which the highest salary does not exceed 10 times the lowest salary) must be implemented. These commercial enterprises can be labelled as "solidarity enterprises of social utility" (entreprise solidaire d'utilité sociale, or ESUS) by public authorities (prefecture).

2. SOCIAL ECONOMY STUDY PROGRAMMES IN FRANCE

Types of educational/training programmes identified

As suggested above, the RIUESS network was initiated by a group of 30 universities in France to promote training and education in social and solidarity economy. It stresses its community embedded approach, and the involvement of local actors. The network counts 20 UG courses, 40 PG courses and 19 'other' (from modules lasting a couple of months, to yearlong diplomas). The analysis below is based on the 40 Masters course only.

Focus and thematic content

The focus of all these programmes is on Social and Solidarity Economy, with some variation on the theme (e.g. Cultural Management, Social Inclusion, Sustainable Development, local development), or specialisation in one particular area of management (e.g. Financial management, HR). For example, the Université de Rennes offers a Master's in Social and Solidarity Economy - Finance and Management of social enterprises. Most often than not 'Social and Solidarity Economy' figures in the title of the programme, other common mentions are to social innovation, cultural innovation or community development. For example, The Université de Lorraine in Metz offers a Master in 'Innovation Culturelle et Sociale', l'Université de Toulon offers a Masters in Sustainable Development. There is however rarely mention of social enterprise in the title or content of the programmes (with a few exceptions, for example the Université de Reims and of Rouen both offer a Master in 'Management des entreprises de l'Economie sociale et solidaire').

In terms of content, Master programmes offer a range of modules from quite theoretical ones (e.g. historical, sociological, political analysis of Social Economy, ethics) to more vocational / practical ones focusing on various management competencies (with courses on finance, marketing, HR...) as well as more transferable skills such as research methods and languages. Courses situated within Social Sciences and Humanities Schools place a greater focus on social science approaches (history, sociology, philosophy or even anthropology) than courses situated in Economics and Management Schools (probably the majority), which whilst including some modules on the values of SE, the history and institutions of the sector, place a greater emphasis on the 'management' side.

For example, the Master in 'New Social Economy' offered at the School of social sciences and humanities in Toulouse has theoretical modules on the history of SE, political philosophy, economic sociology, cultural politics and citizenship, together with more vocational management modules, and guest lecturers / workshops with local actors of SE, internship. Whilst the Master of Economie Sociale et Solidaire delivered by the School of Law, Economics and Management at the Université de Vincennes - Paris 8 focuses more strongly on management modules and include all aspects of management, economic and legal aspects of SE, governance in social enterprises, and a professional project in a local cooperative or community organisation.

Structure of the study programmes

The programmes are modular over 1 or 2 years, all involve some periods of work experience / internship either in students' current employment or through internships, either on an alternating basis (e.g. one week on campus teaching- 2 weeks in work experience; or 3-4 days teaching a month, the rest of time in work experience), or blocked internships of a few months at end of each year (For two year programmes, this is usually 2 months in the 1st year and 4 months in the second year). The alternating model is usually offered to students who study whilst being in employment in a structure of the SE. For example, the Master Gestion des Entreprises Sociales et Solidaires offered at the Management School at the Université Gustave Eiffel- Paris-Est, is restricted to students with a minimum of 3 years' experience within the social economy and who continue in their employment whilst studying.

Teaching / Training approach

All Master courses combine on campus theoretical learning with practical learning and experience within organisations. For example, in the Master Sciences Sociales- Innovation culturelle et sociale at the Université de Lorraine in Metz, students are invited to co-produce knowledge through the organisation of workshops between staff and students and local actors, and the publication of blogs and articles.

All programmes also stress the opportunity offered to students to develop not only theoretical knowledge through the taught part of the programme, but also practical knowledge and the chance to network through for example supervised real life projects within local organisations. For instance, The Master Économie Sociale et Solidaire & Innovation sociale at Bordeaux Institute of Political Studies (as several other Masters) pairs students with local organisations to work as consultants on real life projects.

Involvement of actors of SE

The RIUESS as a whole stresses that its approach to education is to involve actors of the social economy in the programmes. There are several levels at which local community organisations (e.g. coops, mutual societies, local development agencies) are involved in the various programmes reviewed: as guest lecturers or speakers, as one of the parties in the co-organisation of conferences or workshops, as providers of internships, and as providers of projects on which students can provide consultancy. It is less clear what degrees of involvement organisations from the SE have in the creation rather than delivery of the programmes.

Innovative Educational approaches

Overall, it seems that the most innovative aspects of many of the programmes in France consists in their service-learning approach; central to their design in the application of theory to practice through internships or work on real life projects with local actors of the social economy. In some cases, there is in addition further opportunity for students to participate in the co-creation and diffusion of knowledge through the organisation of workshops, or the creation of blogs or journals.

Finally, another innovative aspect of some of these programmes is the 'alternating' mode that enables students to attend the taught part of the courses for a portion of their time (e.g. 3-4 days a month; or 1 or 2 week every month), and continue their employment in a social economy organisation the rest of the time.

3. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the review of provisions in France, the following lessons can be drawn:

- As already discussed, we should have three different targets for the needs analysis: HEI, organisations within the local economy, and students. But within the student group, it might be worth distinguishing between those who have just graduated, and more mature students who already have work experience in the social economy (and maybe continue working whilst studying)
- In terms of SE actors' involvement, it would be interesting to ask at what stage of the programme they are / would like to be involved (e.g. conception, delivery, practical experience or project), and in what capacity (guest speaker, co-organiser of events such workshops, provider / supervisor of internships or projects...).
- In terms of definition of SE, or at least of drawing boundaries around the types of organisations to consider, we could maybe use the combined notion of means and ends to articulate a flexible, inclusive vision of the SE, whilst holding to a set of values. So for example, we could say that we'll include organisations that deploy certain means (here we could stress democratic and participative management, as well capital being subordinated to other stakeholders - be they workers, local community...), to pursue certain ends (for example social utility through community development that is respectful of people as well as of the environment).

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