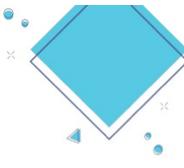




Social
Economy
4Ces



3.3. STATE OF THE ART AND NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORTS ITALY

UNIBO and AICCON



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Table of contents

| | |
|--|---|
| 3.3.1 STATE OF THE ART ITALY | 1 |
| 3.3.1.1. SOCIAL ECONOMY IN ITALY | 1 |
| <i>Institutional context of social economy in the country</i> | 1 |
| <i>Definition of social economy applied in the country context</i> | 1 |
| 3.3.1.2. SOCIAL ECONOMY STUDY PROGRAMMES IN ITALY | 2 |
| <i>Types of educational/training programmes identified</i> | 2 |
| <i>Focus and thematic content</i> | 2 |
| <i>Structure of the study programmes</i> | 3 |
| <i>Teaching / Training approach</i> | 3 |
| <i>Involvement of actors of SE</i> | 3 |
| <i>Innovative Educational approaches</i> | 3 |
| 3.3.1.3. CONCLUSIONS..... | 4 |
| 3.3.1.4 REFERENCES..... | 5 |
| 3.3.2. NEEDS ANALYSIS - ITALY | 1 |
| 3.3.2.1 NEEDS ANALYSIS - EDUCATORS/TRAINERS/PROFESSORS - ITALY | 1 |
| 1. <i>General info about the programme</i> | 1 |
| 2. <i>Programmes content & capability of the programme to answer current social economy needs and challenges</i> | 1 |
| 3. <i>Evaluation of processes/methods</i> | 3 |
| 4. <i>Evaluation of cooperation/relationship with se organisations</i> | 3 |
| 3.3.2.2. NEEDS ANALYSIS - STUDENTS - ITALY | 1 |
| 1. <i>Personal/professional information</i> | 1 |
| 2. <i>Motivation/aspirations</i> | 2 |
| 3. <i>Expectations/wishes</i> | 3 |
| 4. <i>Evaluation of the experience</i> | 3 |
| 3.3.2.3 NEEDS ANALYSIS - SOCIAL ECONOMY UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS - ITALY . | 4 |
| 1. <i>Introduction - social economy actors represented by the people interviewed</i> | 4 |
| 2. <i>Main challenges for the social economy organisations and the role of educational programmes in dealing with them</i> | 5 |
| 3. <i>Main topics for the future educational programmes</i> | 6 |
| 4. <i>Relationships and collaboration in education field</i> | 8 |
| 5. <i>What type of involvement in the future?</i> | 8 |
| 6. <i>Experiences with other educational agencies (not HEIs)</i> | 9 |

3.3.1 STATE OF THE ART ITALY

3.3.1.1. SOCIAL ECONOMY IN ITALY

Institutional context of social economy in the country

In Italy, the social economy started to really flourish from the 1970s, joining forces with traditional charitable organizations that offered support to the Italian population for centuries. Reinforced by the Italian strong cooperative tradition, new cooperatives and non-profit organizations emerged in Italy to respond to people's welfare unmet needs. Differently from traditional cooperatives, mainly oriented towards their members' interests, these new organizations were dedicated to the whole community (Borzaga, C., Carini, C., Zandonai, F., 2014). Additionally, non-profit organizations shifted more and more from a function of mainly advocacy, promotion and support to civil participation to a function of production of goods and services of general interest, with the consequent adoption of entrepreneurial activities to ensure their own economic sustainability (Bandini, 2016). Firstly, this led to the use of a new concept, the one of social enterprise, and to a shift in the definition of social economy from a focus on democratic governance and the primacy of labour interests over those of capital, to a focus on the aim of responding to people's unmet needs. Secondly, this caused the gradual inclusion in the social economy sector of previously excluded legal and organizational forms. In fact, foundations and other forms of social enterprises established according to the traditional capitalistic company model have been added to associations, cooperatives and mutuels, provided limitations on profit distribution. (Borzaga, C., Carini, C., Carpita, M., Lori, M., 2016). The concept of "social enterprise" seems to have appeared for the first time in Italy when it was promoted through the journal 'Impresa Sociale' launched in 1990. Then, in 1991, the Italian Parliament adopted a law on social cooperative enterprises, distinguishing "A-type social cooperatives", delivering social, health and educational services, and "B-type social co-operatives" providing work integration for disadvantaged people. This is relevant because the evolution of social entrepreneurship in Italy is strongly related to the evolution of social cooperatives (Defourny, J., Nyssens, M., 2010). Meanwhile, other types of non-profit organizations kept developing social entrepreneurial activities. In 2006, the first law regulating social enterprises passed. Recently, in 2017, the so called 'Reform of the Third Sector' established a clear framework for social economy and social entrepreneurship. We will cover definitions in the following paragraph.

Definition of social economy applied in the country context

The Social Economy in Italy traditionally is also called 'Third Sector'. Social Economy definition in Italy is aligned with the one provided by [Social Economy Europe](#). A social economy organization carries on activities with public interests, adhering to the following principles: primacy of individuals and social interests over capital, redistribution constraints and obligations of reinvestment of surpluses in the organization itself, democratic governance based on a stakeholdership or multi-stakeholdership model, independence from public or for-profit organizations, possibility to perform entrepreneurial activities and to receive voluntary work contribution. The Social economy includes associations, foundations, NGOs, mutuels, philanthropic organizations, cooperatives, social enterprises. Therefore, the concept of social economy includes also *"all forms of associations and foundations that do not manage activities for the production of goods or services or do not move significant economic resources, as the use of the term "economy" would imply."* (Borzaga, C., Carini, C., Carpita, M., Lori, M., 2016).

In terms of a definition of social entrepreneurship, Italy adopts the one provided by [EMES Network](#), which is established on a framework of three dimensions.¹ The economic and entrepreneurial

¹ "The EMES approach derives from an extensive dialogue among several disciplines (economics, sociology, political science and management) as well as among the various national traditions and contexts in the European Union. Moreover, guided by a project that was both theoretical and empirical (1996-2000), it preferred from the outset the

dimensions of social enterprises are indicated by: a continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services, a significant level of economic risk, a minimum amount of paid work. The social dimensions of social enterprises are displayed by: an explicit aim to benefit the community, an initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations, a limited profit distribution. The participatory governance of social enterprises is based on: a high degree of autonomy, a decision-making power not based on capital ownership, a participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity. It is important to underline that certain types of social enterprises are not part of the social economy, as it was defined above (EMES, 2001).

3.3.1.2. SOCIAL ECONOMY STUDY PROGRAMMES IN ITALY

Types of educational/training programmes identified

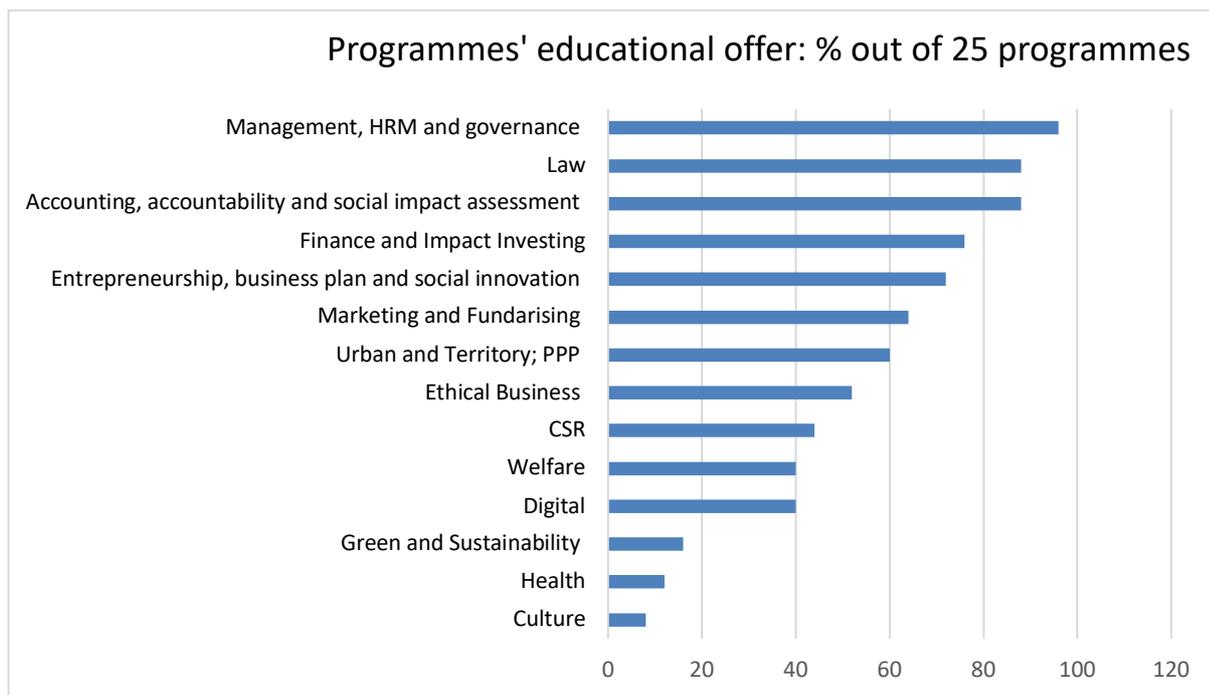
We could identify 25 university programmes offering training on social economy. The totality of the programmes are at the postgraduate education level: there are 3 masters of sciences, 8 first-level masters, 4 second-level masters, 3 executive masters, 7 advanced training courses. There are no bachelors or PhDs focusing on the social economy.

Focus and thematic content

Most of these programmes are organized within the Department of Management of the universities, thus they have a strong management focus; however, some of these courses are offered by the Department of Political Sciences or the one of Social Sciences or by the Faculty of Law. They all aim at training managers and entrepreneurs able to operate effectively in the social economy. In particular, there is equal distribution on the perspectives assumed by the programmes, such as management of the social economy/the third sector, management of social enterprises, management of cooperative enterprises, management and welfare, management for social innovation. We did not take into consideration programmes focusing on international cooperation and development.

In the graph below there is an overview of the educational offer of these 25 programmes, divided into 14 classes of contents.

identification and clarification of indicators over a concise and elegant definition (Borzaga, C., Defourny, J., 2001). These indicators have long been presented in two subsets: a list of four economic indicators and a list of five social indicators (Defourny 2001, 16-18). For comparative purposes however, it appeared more appropriate to distinguish three subsets rather than two, which allows highlighting forms of governance specific to the EMES type of social enterprise.” <https://emes.net/focus-areas/>



Structure of the study programmes

First-level, second-level, executive masters and advanced training courses offer flexible solutions such as part-time education, weekend classes, online teaching (substantially increased during the pandemic). Meanwhile, 2-year masters offer full-time education, therefore they are ill-suited for working professionals. In terms of target audience, first-level masters are tailored to graduate students and professionals with a bachelor degree, as well as advanced training courses; second-level masters are for postgraduate students or professionals with a master's degree, executive masters target working professionals and masters of science refer to graduate students. The structure of the programmes is modular. The length of the programme can be up to 1 year for advanced course trainings and masters and it is 2 years for masters of sciences.

Teaching / Training approach

All the identified programmes provide in-depth theoretical learning combined with more practical learning including workshops, laboratories, internships, project works, events, research activities and thesis development. Some programmes offer the opportunity to develop business ideas within the course, or participate in projects abroad and field trips. Some programmes also focus on enhancing networking and placement opportunities for their students.

Involvement of actors of SE

There is not consolidated collaboration between universities and social economy organizations and networks in the creation of the programmes, even though 8 programmes out of 25 explicitly stated of having a social economy organization or network as partner of the programme. There is higher collaboration in delivering trainings, since professionals from the social economy field are invited to meet students during lectures, workshops, events and projects, as well as during traineeship and internship experiences. There is no sign in the programmes' websites of collaboration with local social economy organizations or social enterprises.

Innovative Educational approaches

Overall, it seems that the most innovative aspects in some of the programmes currently offered in Italy are the combination of theoretical and practical elements, as mentioned in the paragraph about teaching and training approaches. Furthermore, flexible classes, online education, part-time

mode are all interesting aspects able to facilitate the students. There is no explicit mention of service-learning educational approaches in the programmes' websites.

3.3.1.3. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the state-of-the-art analysis of Italy, the following considerations are relevant for the design of the needs analysis step:

- Targets for the needs analysis: HEI teachers and staff, organisations within the local social economy as well as social economy networks at local and national and international level, and students (currently enrolled, just graduated, graduated a few years ago).
- Contents: we noticed that certain topics are not offered very often, such as 'health' 'green and sustainability' and 'culture', therefore it seems that programmes are more focused on offering technical instruments for social economy managers and social economy entrepreneurs, than focusing on specific areas where the social economy is more active.
- Educational approaches: they tend to be quite frontal lectures, with certain best practices, including practical experiences, such as projects in collaboration with the social economy field at the local and national level.
- Collaboration with the social economy field is present at different levels, however there no signs of service-learning methodologies.

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Social Economy Europe, <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/the-social-economy/>

EMES Network, <https://emes.net/focus-areas/>

3.3.2. NEEDS ANALYSIS – ITALY

3.3.2.1 NEEDS ANALYSIS – EDUCATORS/TRAINERS/PROFESSORS - ITALY (UNIBO)

Executive summary:

- Universities are still not co-planning study programmes on the social economy with social economy organizations; curriculum, training methods, learning outcomes are still decided only by universities. Social Economy organizations are mostly involved in delivering seminars, workshops.
- Training and teaching methods are not fully offering the specific competences needed in the social economy field and the transversal soft skills.
- The need for mentorship and tutorship to students by professors and professionals of the social economy was frequently expressed, sometimes performed through a third person such as a study tutor, course coordinator.
- Blended learning, introduced during the pandemic was appreciated, but also not considered appropriate to stimulate interaction, the development of competences and mind-sets.
- An interesting idea came up: multi-targeting, which consist in offering social economy courses to students and professionals of public/private management, to promote dialogue and mutual-learning and collaboration.

1. GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Interviews on study programmes:

ID1. Advanced Training Course in Impact management, strategy and finance for social entrepreneurship and the third sector - University of Bologna

ID2. Master in Economics of Cooperation (MUEC) - University of Bologna

ID3. Executive Master in Management of Social Enterprises and Non-Profit Organizations - SDA Bocconi

ID4. Master of Science in Management of Social Economy - University of Bologna

2. PROGRAMMES CONTENT & CAPABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME TO ANSWER CURRENT SOCIAL ECONOMY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

What do you think are the current needs and challenges of the social economy?

One of the most important need is being entrepreneurial, innovative, creative to stay on the market, even for non-profit organizations not only for social enterprises. Also, professors mentioned the need for social economy organizations to be able to create collaborations, partnerships with different players in the social economy, such as the public sector, private companies, other social economy organizations, investors and financial markets. Finally, the it was mentioned the need to enhance trust of the different players and stakeholders of the social

economy, by offering a different solution to the current economic model, proposing a more socially and environmentally sustainable model.

Which knowledge (knowing things) and competences (knowing how to do things, skills, abilities, attitudes, motivations) do you think a social economy professional should have to face these needs and challenges?

- Managerial competences and being able to adapt such competences to the social economy context
- Entrepreneurial competences: such as business plan, problem solving, creativity, strategy, social innovation
- Flexibility and problem solving to manage and work in innovative organizations and to balance the tensions between social mission and business ventures, similar to the flexibility needed during the start-up phase of a business
- Competences to contaminate different forms of business to create hybrid organizations
- Competences to create partnerships: enhancing networking skills to be more effective in the collaboration with other players and stakeholders; enhancing communication skills
- Competences of project management and administration to exploit opportunities
- Social Impact Evaluation competences and impact investing competences
- Human Resources competences to boost the attention to internal stakeholders, such as volunteers and workers, in order to include them in the social mission and to keep the best talents. Not only selecting professionals but also give value to the best talents.
- Contaminations with external competences, such as research skills, brand marketing
- Mindset: win-win mindset, finding common interests to work for together; attitudes: cooperation, team work
- Values and motivations: willingness to make a difference

In general, how much is the study programme able to provide knowledge and competences necessary to answer to the challenges of the social economy, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (totally)? To which challenges does the study programme not answer?

Participants agreed on a high satisfaction of the knowledge offered by the programmes. On the other and, they were less satisfied with the educational offer in competences and skills. In fact, on a 7 Likert scale, knowledge scored: 7, 6, 7, 5 (average = 6.25) and competences scored: 5, 6, 6, 5 (average = 5.5).

According to the participants, the study programmes do not offer sufficient educational opportunities in order to train students to answer to some of the challenges of social economy. The most important topics there were mentioned as insufficient are European project management and European fundraising; Co-planning and co-producing projects and interventions with other players of the social economy. Some themes were also considered still lacking: social innovation, digital transformation, communication about social economy potential of finding ways for the social

economy to be a credible alternative to the current economic system, collaboration with the public sector, environmental sustainability, social impact evaluation. It was also expressed the strong need of tutorship from professionals and professors to students and the need for more team work and opportunities to develop soft skills. Finally, a proposal of adopting multitargeting was made: the idea is to offer social economy courses to students interested in the public, private and social economy sectors together, to enhance collaboration and reciprocal recognition.

3. EVALUATION OF PROCESSES/METHODS

What training methods, practical and theoretical, are adopted within the course? What other learning experiences are offered to the students during the course?

Theoretical methods are the prevalent ones, so traditional frontal classes are the main approach adopted to teach social economy. Regarding practical educational methods participants referred that some are adopted such as case studies and discussions, lectures and workshops from external guests, internship, project work, laboratories. Finally, some sporadic learning experiences are organized, such as study trips, coaching and tutorship.

How much do you think the training methods are appropriate to develop knowledge and competences necessary to work in the social economy, in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (totally)? What could be improved?

The practical and learning experiences listed above are offered sporadically and discontinuously, so the practical side of the educational offer is quite trivial. Some aspects could be improved, according to professors. First of all, trainers and professors should be able to comment on specific cases of the different students (students are often professionals seeking for advice and advancement). Secondly, professors should be able to be updated on the current opportunities for social economy. Then tutorship should be improved: teachers/trainers/professors should spend more effort on this, students should be better oriented towards their aspirations. Also, offering blended mode was mentioned, in fact, online (lessons, webinar) and in presence (team work, laboratories, lessons aiming at developing competences) could be combined in a study programme. Finally, increasing innovative training methods within every teaching was considered fundamental. The evaluation of training methods on a 7 Likert scale were: 7, 6, 6, 6 (average = 6.25).

4. EVALUATION OF COOPERATION/RELATIONSHIP WITH SE ORGANISATIONS

In which ways are the social economy organizations involved in the course? How often are the social economy organizations involved in the course?

Seminars, lectures, workshops, internships, thesis, project works, mentoring within the network of the study programme, sometimes in co-producing and co-planning the course and evaluation of the offer. Organizations are involved averagely once a month. This results in a discontinuous and trivial involvement of SE stakeholders and professionals, who are invited by professors/educators to give brief lectures on specific topics. The goal is to give a practical perspective on what is taught in classes. However, there is no collaboration between educators and professionals in planning or developing educational material, neither in co-delivering classes.

How much do you think the involvement of the social economy organizations is sufficient to develop knowledge and competences necessary to work in the social economy, in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (totally)? What could be improved?

One participant referred that in some study programmes there is no involvement of the social economy organizations because the target audience is experienced professionals from the social economy. The other interviewees evaluated the involvement of SE organizations on a 7 Likert scale as follow: 6, 7, 5 (average = 6).

Aspects that could be improved, according to participants, are the number of organizations involved, the frequency/intensity of the involvement. It was also suggested to create more interactive modes: a stronger and more structured involvement was required. Also, it was suggested to include a diversity of trainers, such as professors, but also consultants and practitioners.

3.3.2.2. NEEDS ANALYSIS - STUDENTS - ITALY (UNIBO)

Executive summary:

- We noted that the ranking in the evaluation of the programmes by students is usually inferior to the one made by professors, despite trends in the different sections being similar. We decided to report it, even if not statistically significant.

| | Professors/trainers | Students |
|--|---------------------|----------|
| Knowledge | 6.5 | 5.75 |
| Competences | 5.5 | |
| Capability to prepare for occupation in the Social Economy field | – | 5.5 |
| Training methods | 6.25 | 6 |
| Involvement of Social Economy organizations | 6 | 6 |

- Volunteering in a Social Economy organization is a strong motor for enrolment in a social economy study programme and for motivation to work in the social economy
- Competences were considered good but not sufficient, considering students' expectations, the needs of the social economy field and the requirements for placement
- Students expressed the need for better mentorship from professors and professionals of the social economy and for more support in placement (both internship and work after graduation). This leads also to the need for more involvement of social economy organizations during the study programme, not only in the role of delivering seminars and workshops.

1. PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Interviews on study programmes:

ID1. Master of Science in Management for Social Economy - University of Bologna (2nd year student)

ID2. Master of Science in Management for Social Economy - University of Bologna (graduated student)

ID3. Master of Science in Management for Social Economy - University of Bologna (graduated student)

ID4. Master in Economics of Cooperation (MUEC) - University of Bologna (graduated student)

Bachelor programmes students followed before the master study in Social Economy:

ID1. Business and economics

ID2. Political sciences and international relations

ID3. Cognitive psychology

ID4. Law for business

Other study programmes students followed before or after the master study in Social Economy:

ID1. None

ID2. Master in Corporate Sustainability Strategies: Financial, Social and Environmental Management in the Circular Economy - Sole24h Business School

ID3. Development economics and international cooperation - Università Tor Vergata Rome

ID4. Master of Science in Management for Social Economy - University of Bologna

Did you have a job in the social economy before, during and after the course of study? If so, in which organization and what was your role?

Before the study programme nobody had a job in the social economy sector. During the study programme only ID2 was working, firstly as an intern and then as an employee, in different associations. After the study programme, ID2, ID3, ID4 were working in the social economy field, respectively as a coordinator of an association devoted to disabilities and fundraiser, as researcher and social impact evaluator, as leader of a department dedicated to welfare in a cooperative credit bank; (ID1 were not graduated yet).

Are/Were you a volunteer in the social economy before, during and after the course of study? If so, in which organization and what was your role?

Before the study programme, 4 out of 4 students referred they were volunteering in a social economy organization. While, during the study programme, 2 people answered they were volunteering in a SE organization. After the study programme, 2 people answered they were volunteering in a SE organization. So, it is clear that being involved in a social economy organization as volunteer can be a strong motivation to enroll in a social economy study programme. At the same time, this experience can lead students to become SE professionals.

2. MOTIVATION/ASPIRATIONS

Why did you enrol in the study programme? Were there any particular aspects of the course of study that interested you? How did you find out about the programme? What are/were your occupational aspirations during the study programme?

Motivation to enrol is rooted in an interest in the social economy in general, but also an interest in the wellbeing of communities, ethical business. People were mostly interested in the topics covered by the programmes' curriculum. In addition, ID3 stressed the importance of few requirements to be admitted since they were not coming from a bachelor in economics or any related topics. ID2 and ID4 underlined the importance of long or short length of the programme, basing on what a person is looking for. ID4 mentioned also training methods. People found were all aspiring to work in the social economy. They mentioned very different things: working and opening a social cooperative/social enterprise, doing research, specializing in social reporting, fundraising, international cooperation, welfare.

3. EXPECTATIONS/WISHES

What were/are your expectations regarding knowledge and competences offered by the study programme? What were/are your wishes regarding knowledge and competences offered by the study programme?

Met expectations/wishes referred to the educational offer of knowledge on social economy. This aspect was considered very solid by everybody. On the other hand, some unmet expectations/wishes were mentioned. Competences and training experiences were still lacking for 4 out of 4 people; coordination and collaboration with social economy organizations could be improved, as well as working placement, for example by offering a mentoring programme or by creating more contact with social economy organizations. Some courses/topics were not sufficiently covered, in particular, HRM, European project management and funding application, social reporting and accountability, strategy, statistics. In addition, some competences/ learning experiences were not considered sufficient, specifically, team work, economics competences, contextualization.

4. EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Evaluation of preparation to work in the social economy field: How much do you consider this study programme adequate to prepare you to work in the social economy, on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)? If you are graduated, how much do you think the study programme prepared you for your current occupation, on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)? What do you think should be improved in the study programme to prepare students for employment in the social economy?

Evaluations ranked from 5 to 6 (average = 5.5). People confirmed the need for more practical experiences, better connection and collaboration with the social economy organizations, better working placement.

Evaluation of knowledge and competences: How much do you think the knowledge (KNOWING or studies in general) and skills (KNOWING HOW TO DO AND KNOW HOW TO BE, such as motivations, attitudes, interpersonal skills, etc.) acquired during the study programme are sufficient to work in the social economy, in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)? What do you think should be improved?

Evaluation ranked from 5 to 7 (average = 6). People confirmed the need for more competences. Competences are a combination of KSA (knowledge - skills - attitudes). According to what participants referred, skills are not sufficiently stimulated and developed by students. Participants also underlined the need to include knowledge about: European project management, public-private partnerships, HRM, sustainable finance, strategy.

Evaluation of training and teaching methods: How much do you think the training and teaching methods used facilitate the acquisition of knowledge (KNOWING or studies in general) and skills (KNOWING HOW TO DO AND KNOW HOW TO BE, such as motivations, attitudes, interpersonal skills, etc.) to work in the social economy, in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)? What do you think should be improved?

Evaluation ranked from 4 to 7 (average = 6). People mentioned the need for more time/opportunities to go in depth. Positive relationship with professors, coordinators. Organization for the Master of Science: appreciated the division in 4 cycles (2/3 exams every 2/3 months, instead of semesters). Organization for the master MUEC: advice to create a programme in alternating weekend to facilitate working students.

Evaluation of the involvement of social economy organizations: How satisfied were you with the involvement of social economy organizations (during workshops, projects, internships, etc.), on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)? What do you think should be improved?

Evaluation ranked from 5 to 7 (average = 6). People confirmed the need for better connection and collaboration with social economy organizations for internships and placement; in addition, the need for a broad diversity of organizations was mentioned.

3.3.2.3 NEEDS ANALYSIS - SOCIAL ECONOMY UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS - ITALY (AICCON)

1. INTRODUCTION - SOCIAL ECONOMY ACTORS REPRESENTED BY THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Several topics concerning the various actors of the Italian Social Economy and their relationship with the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) have been pointed out and explored during the four interviews conducted. The respondents represent different SE umbrella organisations composed of multiple actors that constitute the players of the Social Economy in Italy as follows:

| Interview code | SE Umbrella Organisation interviewed | SE type represented |
|----------------|--|--|
| ITW#1 | National Third Sector Forum (<i>Forum del Terzo Settore Nazionale</i>) | Third Sector organisations (associations, social cooperatives/social enterprises, NGOs) |
| ITW#2 | Cooperative Group CGM (<i>Gruppo Cooperativo CGM</i>) | Social cooperatives/social enterprises |
| ITW#3 | National Association of Service Centres for Volunteering - CSVnet (<i>Associazione nazionale dei Centri di servizio per il volontariato - CSVnet</i>) | Volunteering organisations |
| ITW#4 | National Association of grant-making foundations and private institutional philanthropy - Assifero (<i>Associazione nazionale delle Fondazioni ed Enti filantropici italiani - Assifero</i>) | Grant-making Foundations and private institutional philanthropy |

- **National Third Sector Forum**² aims at representing the needs and interests of Social Economy Organizations (Social Cooperatives and Social Enterprises, Volunteering Organizations, Associations, NGOs) toward Public Institutions but also private actors. The Forum was established in 1997 and 92 national networks articulated in more than 158,000 local networks form it. In order to be part of the Forum, organisations need to respect participative and democratic principles. Consequently, Foundations and Religious Organizations are not included.
- **Cooperative Group “Consorzio Gino Mattarelli” (CGM)**³ represents the world of the Social Cooperatives/Social Enterprises. CGM created a network composed of 58 Territorial Consortia and 701 Social Cooperatives and Social Enterprises employing 42,000 workers. The role of CGM is to support local network initiatives by providing enterprise services and build national and European development projects in order to sustain their members’ initiatives.
- **CSVnet**⁴ has been involved with the aim of having information on the volunteering world. CSVnet is the national association of Service Centres for Volunteering (SCVs; in Italian, CSV) and is composed by 51 members (SCVs). The aim of CSVnet is to encourage the cooperation and the sharing of knowledge among local SCVs, whose objective is not only to spread the value of volunteering and solidarity in particular among young people, but also to organize courses for volunteers and to assist local organisations.
- **Assifero** (National Association of grant-making foundations and private institutional philanthropy)⁵ represents the Foundations’ world. The term Institutional Philanthropy refers to a social and economic sphere formed by non-profit actors, which catalyse and redistribute principally economic resources, but also social-relational and intellectual resources. The aim of the Association is on one hand to increase resources, but also to use them in an effective way in order to ensure the quality of the impact. Another relevant point is related to the development of the competences and the construction of connections among actors. Since 2016, Assifero works in order to evolve from a mere resource-dispenser to an innovative player who works for a long-term impact embracing a specific *Theory of Change* strategy.

2. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMY ORGANISATIONS AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN DEALING WITH THEM

Most of respondents agreed that the **relationship with Public Institutions** is not always simple. Firstly, even if the Social Economy sector is various and in growth, it seems that there is a difference in considering Social Enterprises compared to Associations and Volunteering Organisations even though the latter are more numerous. In this regard, in some cases, Public Administrations do not always consider Organisations and Associations’ needs and capabilities, as it became clear during the Pandemic through the Government’s decrees.

In addition, currently, Social Economy actors are seen as collaborators in the service providing process. However, respondents state that the so-called “Third Sector” should be allowed to make a proposal and to design services with Public Institutions (ITW#1, ITW#3). In this respect, ITW#1

² <https://www.forumterzosettore.it/> (not available in English)

³ <http://cgm.coop/> (not available in English)

⁴ <https://www.csvnet.it/english-version>

⁵ <https://assifero.org/en/>

underlines the fact that the Italian Recovery Plan does not fully consider the importance and the capacities of Social Economy actors, referring also to the fact that the French Government has been more able than its Italian counterpart to valorise its non-profit sector, even if the French Third Sector is less broad.

ITW#1 states that the Pandemic has shown the resilience capability of Social Economy actors, who were able to reinvent themselves and find new ways to provide services in response to new social needs. However, at the same time, this period brought out the lack of digital competences of non-profit actors (ITW#3, ITW#2, and ITW #1).

Another challenge mentioned is tied with the **Human Resources (HR) Management**. The reason why HR management is so important is related to the saving associated with an efficient HR management that can be reached with a more “scientific” approach (ITW#2). In addition, social cooperatives, which were born in the 90s, nowadays experience the first generational change. In this regard, the importance to attract new workers with new skills is acknowledged and one possible way to achieve this objective is related to the treatment of HR. On the one hand, it is necessary to face the salaries topic because they are usually lower than the ones of the for-profit sector, and, on the other hand, non-profit actors should develop clear career growth plans in order to be more appealing. For this reason, a new approach is needed, not only for what concerns HR, but also for the management, which in some aspects is different from the for-profit sector management, and for project-design whose instruments are not always well known (ITW#2).

In addition, there is a **lack of knowledge about the Third Sector Reform**. ITW#3 says that Service Centres for Volunteering have an important role in supporting local actors to understand the new law and adapt their structure in order to respect it. In addition, SCVs promote the creation of associative and territorial networks for giving a unified response.

Networks are also relevant for ITW#4, whose aim is to “build bridges” and overcome the traditional arrangement of the Foundation that provide resources from its “ivory tower”. In order to get over this model, ITW#4 is exploring **new tools designed to support Social Enterprises** through innovative non-reimbursable contributions⁶. However, if, on the one hand, Foundations find it difficult to leave the old model based on the single project and the short-term assessment, on the other hand, also Social Enterprises and non-profit actors in general, do not have the specific competencies to meet the requests and present their *Theory of Change*. In conclusion, in order to create a new strategy for the Foundations, it is important to acquire expertise in the co-design process and to have a long-term vision.

3. MAIN TOPICS FOR THE FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Respondents have shared the opinion that in general that the way **HEIs’ programmes are designed are not always thinking about Social Economy actors’ needs**. Some respondents state that it is necessary to rethink of the educational courses in order to make them more suitable to the Third Sector organisations requests (ITW#1; ITW#4). ITW#1 suggests the importance to focus not only on some actors such as Social Enterprises as it would be reductive because they are a minority of the 350,000 players of the Third Sector. In fact, Associations - which are about half of the total Third Sector organisations- are often not considered. Thus, it is important to recognize all the different entities that constitute the Social Economy sector in order to give a satisfactory answer to their deficiencies ensuring a smoother collaboration with Public Institutions.

⁶ <https://assifero.org/digital-talk-filantropia-ed-economia-sociale/>

For instance, ITW#1 and ITW#2 agreed that HEIs do not provide specific competences of **HR management** related to the non-profit sector and that the “classic” HR management is not always suitable for non-profit actors. In particular, ITW#1 refers to the **management of volunteers**, a peculiar aspect of the non-profit world that cannot be compared to the HR management of for-profit actors. On the other hand, the necessity to develop also **non-traditional skills and soft skills** through a process of **capacity building** (ITW#2) and **specific soft skills** (e.g., empathy and change making competences) has emerged aiming to promote a systemic approach (ITW#4). In addition, ITW#4 and ITW#2 highlighted successions as a problematic topic since the Italian Third Sector Entities have often strong founders and members who have played the same role for a long time. This, as said before, makes it difficult to promote intergenerational change.

Another issue is related to **sustainability**, environmental, social and economic. ITW#3 states that it is important to invest in these areas by promoting innovation and research in all topics of “general interest” at the same time (cfr. Art 5 of Third Sector Code). In this regard, there are some aspects that are well known and in which Associations and Volunteer Organisations are experts, while others that are newer and need to be studied further.

Social Economy actors should develop competences in order to respect the triad suggested by ITW#4: **Plan, Communicate, Assess their Impact**. Being able to build a transformative relationship, to be flexible and adaptive is crucial for these players. At the same time, it is important to assess the impact both for the resource providers and for those who put the project into practice. To this end, ITW#4’s social assessment is based on the so-called 4C: financial capacity, capability, connection, and credibility.

As mentioned before, the **digitalisation** of non-profit actors is essential and it became even more relevant during the Pandemic. According to ITW#4, digital tools should not be perceived only as technical instruments but also something to use in order to reach the objective (e.g., in the fundraising courses the use of digital instruments is not broadly discussed, and the topic of data philanthropy is largely ignored). In addition, being able to overcome this problem is crucial due to the fact that digitalisation could help in **community building**, promoting the development of networks among Social Economy actors, and to favour the creation of the relationships among them and other subjects as Public Administrations (ITW#1). **Networks** are highly important also for ITW#4, as said before, for there is a lack of competences (on both the demand and the supply side) which makes it difficult to create a new model of the Foundation that builds bridges.

In this regard, the Reform of the Third Sector underlines the importance of the processes of co-programming and co-designing Third Sector Actors and Institutions. Acquire **co-programming and co-designing competences** is highly important for all the interlocutors and, in order to promote the collaboration between non-profit actors and Public Institutions, it is central to provide educational knowledge and promote academic research on this topic.

Finally, ITW#4 notes the absence of HEIs courses in Italy about **Strategic Philanthropy**. In order to develop specific competencies about this topic it is possible to attend the courses offered by European Venture Philanthropy Association⁷ but in some cases there are linguistic barriers that make it impossible to take them.

⁷ <https://evpa.eu.com/about-us/about-evpa>

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION FIELD

STATE-OF-THE-ART (EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS)

In order to deal with the lack of competences about HR management, the biggest non-profit players tend to arrange **internal formative courses**, and so do ITW#1 and ITW#3 since 2007, especially for the executive staff of Social Economy Organisations who come from Southern Italy⁸. In this regard, the relevant point is that courses' speakers are usually Professors from Academia, so there is a collaboration between the ITW#1 and the HEIs in this sense.

ITW#2 in the past collaborated with the Bicocca University (a University in Milan) in order to build an Academic Master Course on the Third Sector, but nowadays they are not involved in any similar project. Particularly, ITW#2 is committed to meet the needs of social cooperatives by organising courses with specific Social Economy partners (e.g., Triulza Foundation⁹, School of Social Enterprise¹⁰) about different topics such as **project design and management**.

For what concern ITW#3, there are different kinds of relationships with the academic world. In some cases, they are recipients that benefit from internships and research of students, in other occasions they have been involved as consultants to build educational courses, to bring their expertise to the students or to participate to academic research. However, collaborations and ties do not develop homogeneously in all the national territory; there are some relevant differences that cause imbalances.

A relevant link between ITW#3 and Academia is represented by the foundation of the Volunteer Universities¹¹ which was born in 2014 in Bologna and Treviso. Academics and experts from research centres, for-profit companies and Third Sector organisations hold courses that are strictly linked to the needs of the territory and their aim is to provide specialist competences to volunteers.

5. WHAT TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE FUTURE?

What emerged is the **willingness to be involved**, not necessarily as the main actor (ITW#2), and the collaboration between the Third Sector and HEIs which can be promoted in different ways (ITW#1).

For what concerns the **design phase**, one of the most relevant things is to consider Third Sector Players as competence-holders that could help to build HEIs programmes. Thus, they must be seen not only as recipients, but also as proactive entities (ITW#1, ITW#2) that can help to define which the priorities are (ITW#1, ITW#2, and ITW #4).

However, at the same time, a collaboration between Social Economy actors and Academic Researchers is needed because of the continuous evolution in some academic fields such as management or non-profit sector in general (ITW#2, ITW#3). For this reason, some interlocutors state that Academic professors should provide courses where non-profit actors could have a limited role (e.g., bringing expertise) (ITW#2), while for others the inclusion of practitioners' lecturers seems to be more relevant.

⁸ FQTS - *Formazione Quadri Terzo Settore*: <https://www.fqts.org/>

⁹ <https://fondazionetriulza.org/>

¹⁰ <http://scuolaimpresasociale.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.univol.it/>

Finally, Social Economy actors can have a central role in **evaluating** students' competencies and the short-term impact (ITW#2), in order to re-program the course considering the results of the assessment (ITW#4).

6. EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES (NOT HEIs)

Partnerships between Social Economy players and schools depend on the availability of teachers and school heads. Social Economy actors promote projects with lower educational Institutions, both for **introducing themselves and the sector**, and for lectures on **particular topics**. All the respondents stated that they arrange presentations about the Third Sector, what the job opportunities in this field are, what their own organisation does and are aimed to raise awareness among young people and children (ITW#3, ITW#1, ITW#2).

In addition, non-profit organisations intervene episodically during courses in order to deepen specific themes related to the educational schedule (ITW#1), but, at the same time, there are specific and continuous forms of collaboration. For instance, schools rely on cultural associations for providing courses about music and other creative arts (ITW#1).

What is more, the Third Sector tends to take actions against educational poverty and school exclusion working with Formative Institutions (ITW#1). The Pandemic fostered relationships between Educational Institutions and Social Economy Organisations and the necessity to develop digital skills arose, thus, ITW#2 is working with children on the technology theme.

If some actors (e.g., ITW#1) do not have a clear view about the different projects encouraged by the volunteering world with primary and secondary schools, in 2019 ITW#3 mapped 219 projects born thanks to these collaborations, reporting data and results of the research¹². However, **not everyone promotes structured collaboration with Educational Agencies**, for instance ITW#4 does not, even if it recognizes the importance to spread Third Sector Principles among students.

¹² *A lezione di Volontariato: I progetti dei Csv per gli studenti italiani, 2018-19* (not available in English)