Report on the Progress of the Proximity and Social Economy Transition Pathway

1. Introduction

This report serves as a comprehensive overview of the submitted pledges within the Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem.[1] To do so, an analysis of the action areas covered, the diversity of actors involved, and the geographic reach is made. By examining these dimensions, the report aims to provide valuable insights into the contributions and synergies of pledges within the broader ecosystem.

A key objective is to contextualise the pledges, linking them to relevant EU, national, and regional public or private initiatives. Additionally, the report will inform other ecosystem communities about emerging trends and strategic opportunities, fostering collaboration and shared learning.

Updated biannually, the report will be accessible on the EU Proximity and Social Economy Platform[2], providing a detailed "progress and implementation" section. This segment will include both quantitative and qualitative analyses of pledge implementation, identifying both opportunities and areas to improve the overall performance of the ecosystem in implementing the Transition Pathway. This format will allow for regular updates and the integration of qualitative information, offering stakeholders an evolving and accurate representation of the ecosystem's activities and achievements.

In sum, this report not only tracks the progress of individual pledges but also serves as a strategic resource for understanding and enhancing the ecosystem's collective impact, reinforcing its alignment with overarching goals and priorities.

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[1] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/transition-pathway_en
[2] https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/pse

2. Background

2.1 The EU Industrial Strategy

In March 2020, the European Commission (EC) presented the European Industrial Strategy, a plan to support the European industry through the transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership. On May 2021, the EC released an updated European Union (EU) Industrial Strategy, "to ensure that its industrial ambition takes full account of the new circumstances following the COVID-19 crisis and helps to drive the transformation to a more sustainable, digital, resilient and globally competitive economy"[3]. In order to foster the resilience of the Single Market, the Commission proposed, among several initiatives, to monitor on an annual basis the state of the Single Market across **14 industrial ecosystems**, one of them being the "**Proximity and Social Economy**" as it is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Industrial ecosystems
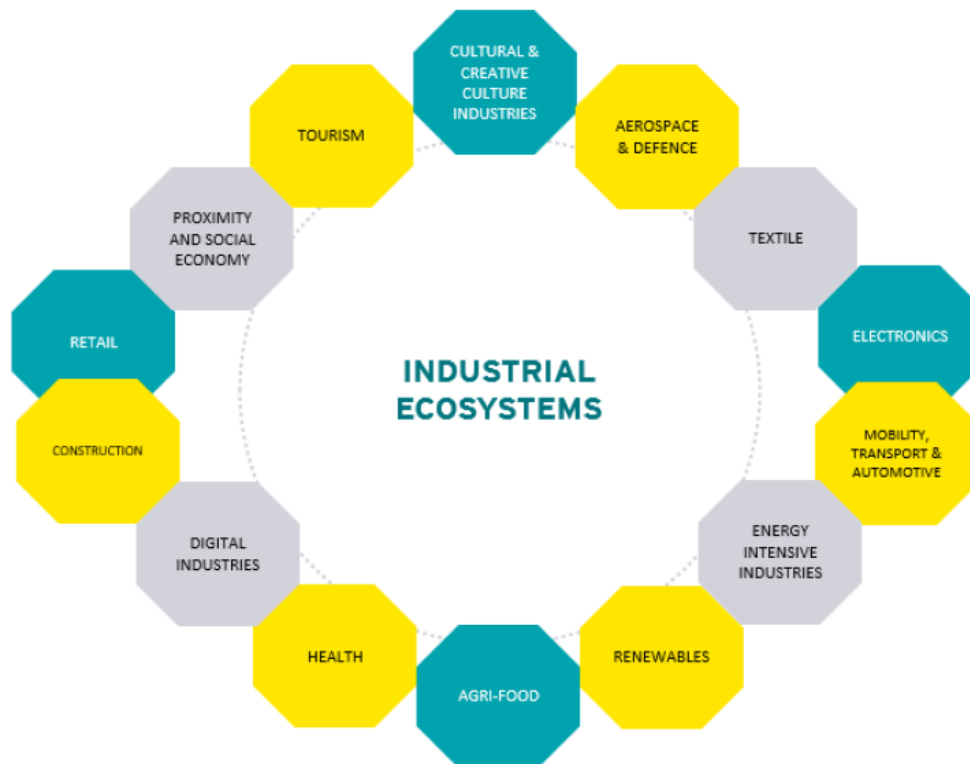
Source: European Commission (n.d.), "European Industrial Strategy", (own illustration).

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[3] European Commission, "EU Industrial Strategy". Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en

2.2 The Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem

It is important to mention that the proximity and social economies are distinct concepts, even if interlinked.

On the **social economy**, the European Commission dedicated a comprehensive action plan in December 2021 with which it defined objectives, measures and instruments for the decade[4]. Above all, the SEAP (Social Economy Action Plan) introduced the first European **definition of the social economy**, hinged on three essential elements: the **primacy of people**, as well as of social and/or environmental goals, over profit; **reinvestment of all or most of the profits** and surpluses to pursue of social and/or environmental aims in the interest of their members/users ('collective interest') or society at large ('general interest'); and **democratic or participatory governance**. The Social Economy Action Plan more recently (November 2023) was followed by the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on developing social economy framework conditions[5]. The social economy plays an important role in facilitating access to the labour market and promoting quality jobs for all, including vulnerable groups and it is recognised for playing an essential role not only in the provision of social services, but also as a driver of social innovation and the twin transition. The social economy ecosystem in the EU is composed by 4.3 million enterprises and organisations and employs 11.5 million people[6].

The **proximity economy** is growing concept in Europe, and it is understood as a human-centric ecosystem which consists of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services within short value chains, enabled by, and based on locally rooted social interactions within a geographical area of perceived closeness. It is driven by the collective intention of the actors within the ecosystem to increase the liveability, sustainability and resilience of the area.[7] The proximity economy includes three different dimensions of proximity: **geographical proximity**, **relational proximity** and **cognitive proximity**. As the social economy, the proximity economy is present in all sectors of activity. A recent study estimates that its added value across the EU is approximately € 6,000 billion, taking into account that regional value chains represent 65% of the value embodied in the goods and services created in European regions, across all industrial ecosystems.[8]

2.3 The Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem

In November 2022, the European Commission released the "Transition Pathway for Proximity and Social Economy"[9] composed of **14 action areas** (seven linked to the green transition and seven linked to the digital transition), as indicated in Table 1, and **30 concrete actions** to be implemented by the EU, Member States, Regions, cities and other stakeholders to achieve the twin transition (green and digital) of the ecosystem.

Supporting the ecosystem on its pathway to the **green transition** is instrumental for aligning the social and green objectives of the EU. On the one hand, unlocking the untapped potential of social economy can drive change and innovation towards a climate-neutral and environment-friendly economy. On the other hand,

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[4] European Commission, "Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy". Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en&

[5] Council of the European Union "Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions". Available at:
https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14113-2023-INIT/en/pdf

[6] European Commission "Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy". Available at:
https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8aa2a5cb-74a7-11ef-a8ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] European Commission, "Transition pathway for the proximity and social economy". Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/52015

entities within social economy enable grassroots initiatives to emerge and ensure a fair green transition for EU citizens. The **digital transition** of the ecosystem is also key for the ecosystem as social economy businesses generally have a low level of digitalisation, mainly in terms of lack of digital skills and investment in digital infrastructure, and they take limited advantage of the potential offered by the platform economy.[10]

Table 1. Action areas of the Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem

Green transition	Digital transition
1. Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains.	8. New business models – the platform economy
2. Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models	9. Data Maturity and data driven business models
3. Certification, labelling and self-regulation	10. Public and private tech partnerships and support
4. Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy	11. Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct
5. Greening infrastructures and business operations	12. Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship
6. Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives	13. Access to technology
7. Addressing capacity and skills gap	14. Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy

Source: European Commission, "Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem", (own illustration).

The implementation phase started after the publication of the Transition Pathway with a **call of pledges** from the European Commission addressed to different stakeholders on the concrete actions that they will take in order to help achieve the shared action areas identified in the Transition Pathway. The main objective of the pledges is to help address gaps, pool resources towards shared milestones and mobilise support at all levels. The European Commission has opened the call for pledges submission in different phases since November 2022. This version of the report incorporates and analyses an additional 17 newly submitted pledges and allows for the next call for submissions will be open until 1 June 2025[11]. It also reports on the progress of a sample of Pledge-taking organisations, including Consortium members, Euricse, Social Economy Europe and the Diesis Network.

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[10] European Commission, "New technologies and digitisation: opportunities and challenges for the social economy and social enterprises". Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/208a8be9-39d5-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[11] https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/TP-PSE_pledges_call_2022.

3. Overview of submitted pledges

As of March 2025, the total number of submitted pledges is 231.[12] It is important to note that **60% of them are linked to the action areas of the Green Transition** and 35%, to the action areas of the Digital Transition. The remaining 6% correspond to pledges taken in the category: Other action areas, as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2.. Distribution of pledges according to the transition to which they are addressed
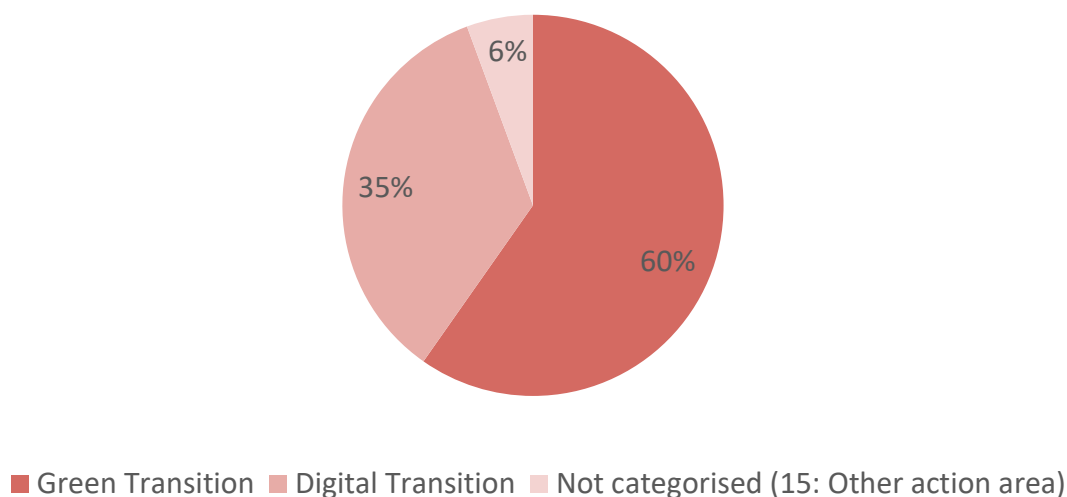
■ Green Transition ■ Digital Transition ■ Not categorised (15: Other action area)

Source: European Commission, "Pledges of the Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem", (own illustration).

3.1 Analysis by action area

The pledges can be submitted as linked to one of the 14 action areas of the Transition Pathways or in the category 15: Other action areas. On the basis of this classification, we can see in Figure 3 that the action area that is associated with the highest number of pledges is number **7: Addressing capacity and skills gap** with 31 (13% of the total pledges). This is followed by 4: Innovation for Green Transition with 25 pledges, 1: Reinforcing B2B Collaboration with 24 pledges, 14: Boosting digital skills by and in the social economy with 23 pledges and 12: Supporting Digital Social Innovation with 19 pledges and 5: greening Infrastructures with 18 pledges.

On the other hand, the less popular areas are 13: Access to technology with only 6 pledges and 11: Data sharing, data management & code of conduct with 7 pledges and 8: New business models – the platform economy with 8 pledges, all of them linked to the digital transition.
This finding emphasises the prevalence of commitments towards the green transition, and therefore the necessity of promoting more initiatives that encourage the digitalisation of the proximity and social economy. Notably, **all action areas are covered by pledges**, and there are no areas associated with zero pledges.

It is important to highlight that **skills** is overall the area in which the stakeholders are more committed to address concrete actions both for the green and digital transitions as 7: Addressing capacity and skills gap

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[12] The published pledges are available at https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/transition-pathway/pledges_en

(green transition) is the first in the ranking by number of submitted pledges and 14: Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy is the third of the ranking with 23 pledges (10% of the total).

*Figure 3. Number of submitted pledges by action area*
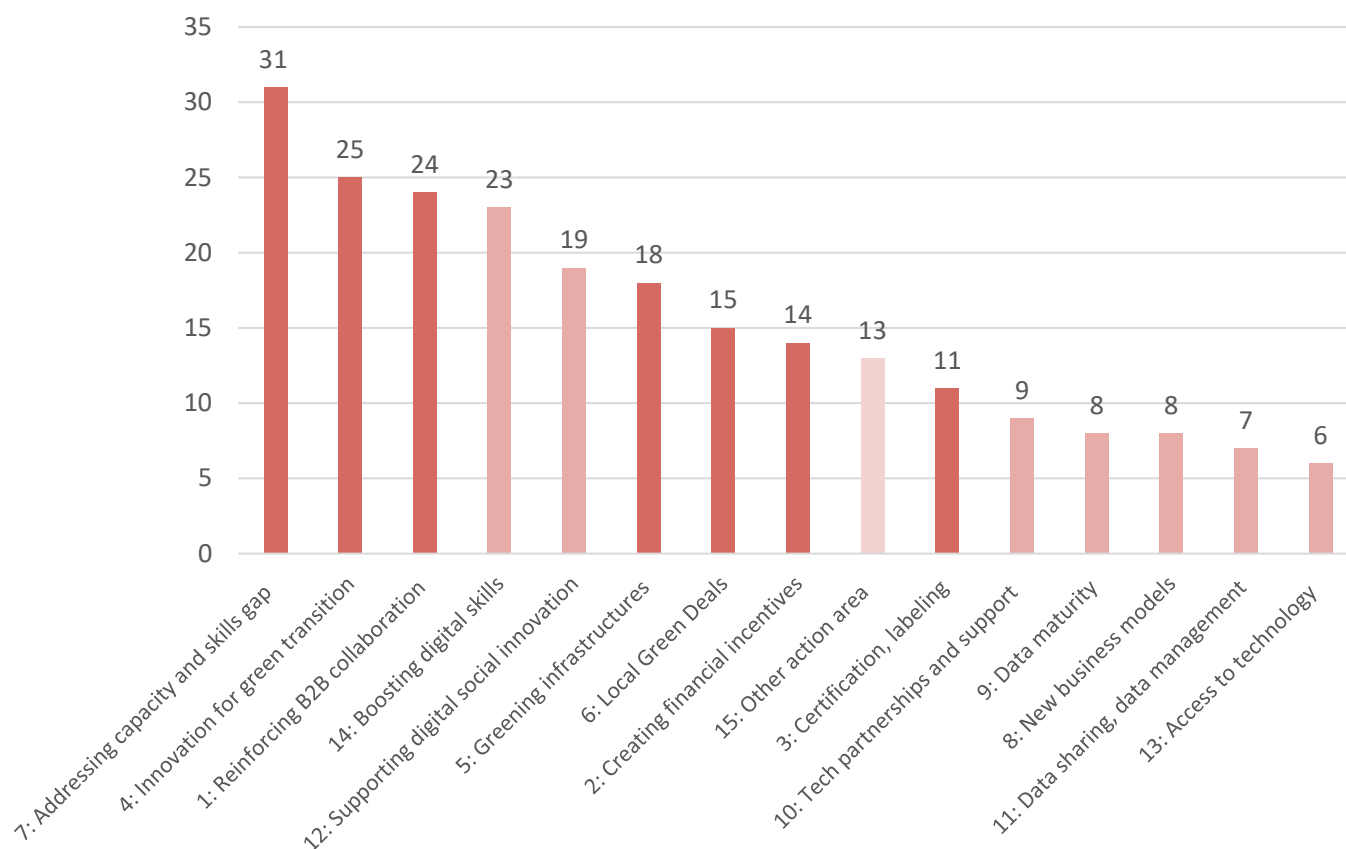
3.2 Analysis by type of stakeholder

The pledges can be submitted on behalf of public and private organisations, not individuals, in the following categories:

- Social economy entity
- National network of organisations / businesses (with members)
- Business support organisation
- Local / regional public authority
- Member State / national authority

- International organisation
- Financial institution / fund
- EU Network of organisations / businesses (with members)
- Academia/university/research centre

By type of organisation, Figure 4, shows that **social economy entities** are the stakeholders that have submitted more pledges with a total of 73 pledges (32% of the total). They are followed by **EU networks of organisations / businesses (with members)** with 56 pledges (24% of the total), business support organisations with 34 pledges, and local / regional public authorities with 27 pledges. It is important to remark that still no pledges have been submitted by the Academia/university/research centre category. It will be therefore important to investigate the causes of this phenomenon, to encourage these stakeholders to commit to the twin transition of this ecosystem.

Figure 4. Number of submitted pledges by type of stakeholders
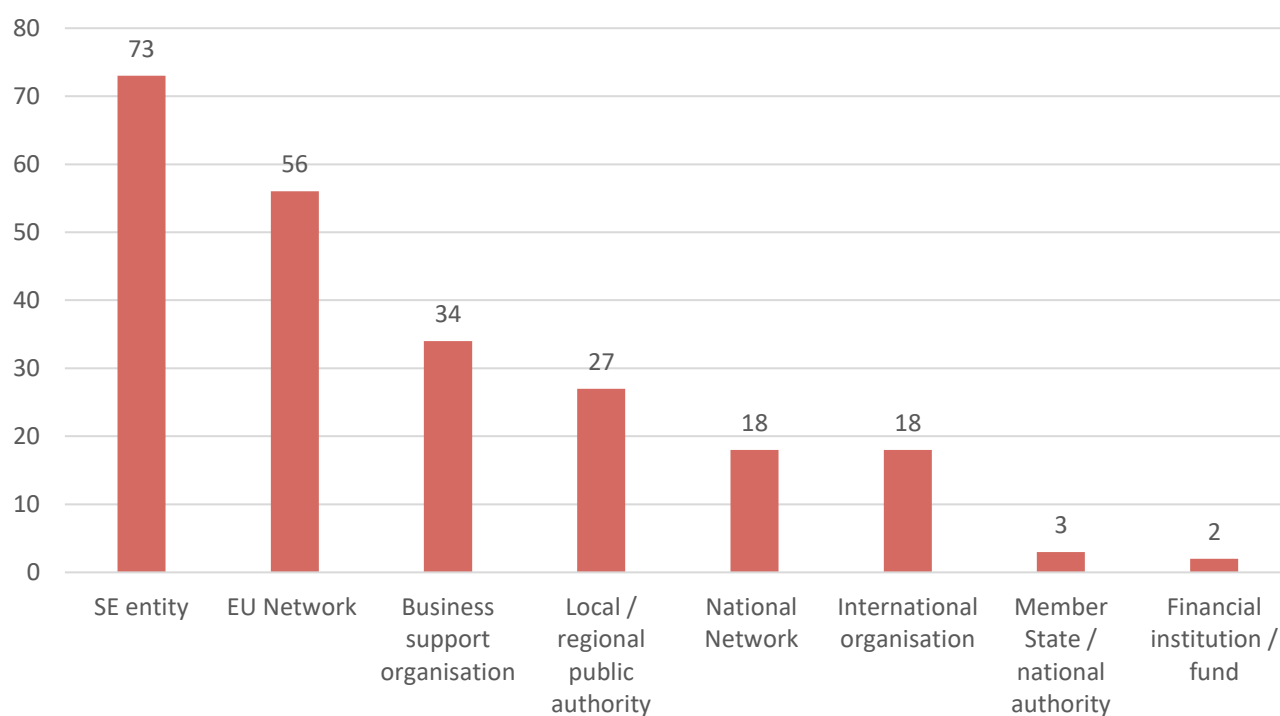
Source: European Commission, "Pledges of the Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem", (own illustration).

Importantly, **some of the pledges are submitted by the same organisation**. In particular, it is remarkable that 14 organisations have submitted five or more different pledges, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Organisations that have submitted more different pledges. Name, type of organisation and number of pledges submitted

Organisation	Stakeholder type	Number of pledges
Strasbourg (city and Eurometropole) and their partners	Local / regional public authority	13
TESS GEIE	EU Network	10
Diesis Network	EU Network	9
MoreThanDigital Insights	International organisation	9
ENSIE	EU Network	7
ESS France outre-mer	Local / regional public authority	6
Fondazione Piemonte Innova	Business support organisation	6
Microfinance Centre	EU Network	6
Social Economy Europe	EU Network	6
Torino Social Impact	Social economy entity	6
Impact Hub Liepāja	Business support organisation	5
Rediscovery Centre	Social economy entity	5

| Social cooperative Humana Nova | Social economy entity | 5 |
| Sostre Cívic | Social economy entity | 5 |

3.3 Analysis by country

Regarding the countries of origin of the pledges, most of them have been made at **EU level** (46 pledges, 19% of total)[13]. **France** has submitted 38 pledges (18%). It is followed by **Italy** with 32 pledges (13%), **Austria** (15 pledges), **Spain** (19 pledges) **Germany** (11 pledges) and **Poland** (10 pledges). It is important to remark that there are five pledges coming from outside the EU, concretely from Jordan, USA and Switzerland. If we analyse the areas of the pledges we can see that in most of the countries, the majority of pledges are linked to the green transition except Italy (15 pledges linked to the digital transition and 10 pledges linked to the green transition), Poland (seven pledges linked to the digital transition and two pledges linked to the green transition), Latvia, Outside EU, Portugal and Sweden (Figure 5).

From this analysis we see that most of the pledges come from Western European countries and the geographic areas that could be further encouraged to pledge are Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Nordic countries.

Figure 5. Number of submitted pledges by country
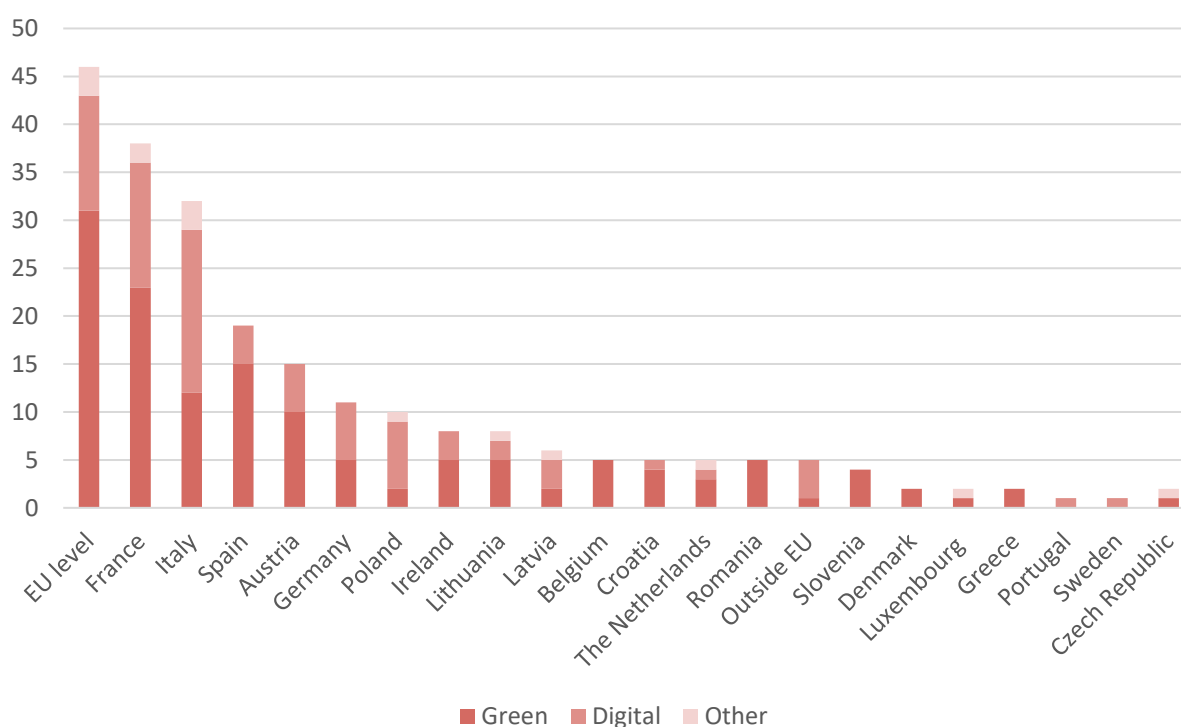
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[13] The approach of pledges at European level have been done to avoid the bias generated for the EU Networks based in Belgium that work at EU level. To do so, we have counted as "EU level" the country of origin of those pledges made by EU Networks based in Belgium that had set Belgium as country in the submission of their pledges.

3.4 Action areas and stakeholders

If we analyse the relationship between action areas and stakeholder types, some interesting findings emerge, as indicated in Table 3:

- The pledges on the action area **7: Addressing capacity and skills gap** (the most popular in number of pledges - 31) are addressed mostly by **EU Networks**, **social economy entities and Business Support Organisations (BSOs)**. Notably, EU Networks and BSOs often have a broad reach and the resources to address systemic issues like capacity and skills gaps across multiple regions and sectors. At the same time, social economy entities are often focused on community development and social inclusion, which often involves addressing skills and capacity gaps to empower individuals and communities.

- The pledges made for **1: Reinforcing B2B collaboration for greener and circular value chains** are mostly made by **local and regional public authorities** and **social economy entities** (with seven pledges each; 29%). This goes to show how public authorities, who are often responsible for implementing environmental policies and supporting local businesses, may be prioritising B2B collaborations to foster local economic development and sustainability. Instead, social economy entities may focus on sustainable practices and community well-being, making them natural proponents of greener and circular value chains.

- The pledges on **14: Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy** are more numerous within **social economy entities** (ten; 43%) and **EU networks** (six; 26%). These entities often work directly with underserved populations, where boosting digital skills can significantly enhance employability and social inclusion.

- On the action area **4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy** the pledges come mainly from **EU networks** (eight; 35%) and **local and regional public authorities** (five; 22%) indicating that these two actors could be key to promote innovation. In particular, EU networks can leverage their extensive connections and resources to promote innovation on a larger scale. Public authorities promoting the proximity economy are often at the forefront of implementing innovative solutions to local environmental and economic challenges, making them key players in promoting green transitions.

Table 3. Cross table: Pledges on each action area by type of organisation that submitted them

Action Area	Business support organisation	EU Network	Financial institution / fund	International organisation	Local / regional public authority	Member State / national authority	National Network	SE entity	Total
1: Reinforcing B2B collaboration for greener and circular value chains	3	4	0	1	7	0	2	7	**24**
10: Public and private tech partnerships	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	**9**
11: Data sharing, data management & code of conduct	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	**7**
12: Supporting digital social innovation & tech for good entrepreneurship	4	3	0	4	1	0	1	6	**19**
13: Access to technology	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	**6**
14: Boosting digital skills by – and in the social economy	2	6	0	1	2	0	2	10	**23**

15: Other action area	3	5	0	0	1	1	0	3	**13**
2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	7	**14**
3: Certification, labelling and self-regulation	0	3	0	1	0	1	2	4	**11**
4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy	4	8	0	1	5	0	1	6	**25**
5: Greening infrastructures and business operations	2	4	1	0	4	0	3	4	**18**
6: Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives	1	6	0	1	2	0	0	5	**15**
7: Addressing capacity and skills gap	7	7	0	2	4	0	4	7	**31**
8: New business models – the platform economy	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	5	**8**
9: Data maturity and data driven business models	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	**8**
Total	**34**	**56**	**2**	**18**	**27**	**3**	**18**	**73**	**231**

Source: European Commission, "Pledges of the Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem", (own illustration).

Notably, pledges have been submitted **mainly by EU networks and social economy entities** except for the following:

● **EU networks and local and regional public authorities** are predominant amongst the pledges on **4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy and 5: Greening infrastructures and business operations**.
● **Local and regional public authorities and social economy entities** are predominant amongst the pledges on **1: Reinforcing B2B collaboration for greener and circular value chains.**
● **Business Support Organisations** are predominant amongst the pledges on **7: Addressing Capacity and Skills Gap.**

3.5 Action areas and countries

When assessing the submitted pledges in light of their action areas and the countries of origin of the pledge-takers, the following results emerge (see Table 4):

● **EU level** is the origin of most pledges on **4. Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy, 6. Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives and 7. Addressing capacity and skills gap with pledges also made in 3. Certification, labelling and self-regulation**, **15. Other action area** and **10. Public and private tech partnerships and support.** These pledges are made by European networks working at EU level and based in Belgium.

- **France** is the origin of most pledges on **1. Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains, 5. Greening infrastructures and business operations, 14. Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy** and **8. New business models – the platform economy.** The high number of pledges on area 1 is explained by the fact that the local and regional public authorities that have submitted a greater number of pledges are French.
- From **Italy** are most of the pledges on **12. Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship, 11. Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct, 10. Public and private tech partnerships and support, 15: Other action area, 2. Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models** and **13. Access to technology.**

Table 4. Cross table: Pledges on each action area by country of origin

Action Area	AT	BE	HR	CZ	DK	EU	FR	DE	EL	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU	Outside EU	PL	PT	RO	SI	ES	SE	NL	Total
1: Reinforcing B2B collaboration for greener and circular value chains	2	1	1	0	1	4	6	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	1	**24**
10: Public and private tech partnerships	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	**9**
11: Data sharing, data management & code of conduct	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**7**
12: Supporting digital social innovation & tech for good entrepreneurship	2	0	0	0	0	4	3	2	0	0	4	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**19**
13: Access to technology	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	**6**
14: Boosting digital skills by – and in the social economy	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	0	2	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	**23**
15: Other action area	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	**13**
2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular value chains	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	**14**
3: Certification, labelling and self-regulation	1	1	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	**11**
4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy	1	0	0	0	0	7	3	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5	0	0	**25**
5: Greening infrastructures and business operations	1	1	1	0	0	3	5	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	**18**

																							Total
6: Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives	1	0	0	0	1	7	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	15
7: Addressing capacity and skills gap	3	2	0	1	0	5	4	2	0	0	4	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	31
8: New business models – the platform economy	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8
9: Data maturity and data driven business models	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Total	15	5	5	1	2	46	38	11	2	8	32	6	8	2	5	10	1	5	4	19	1	5	231

Source: European Commission, "Pledges of the Transition Pathways for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem", (own illustration).

4. Conclusions and next steps

4.1 Progress and implementation

The submission of pledges is an ongoing process and the call is currently open until **1 June 2025**. This makes it necessary to periodically analyse them and continuously monitor them to provide support towards their effective implementation of the Transition Pathway for this ecosystem. The EU Proximity and Social Economy Platform[14] developed by the European Commission will be a key tool to achieve it.

The analysis above allows to draw several conclusions, that need to be taken into consideration:
- Only 34% of the total pledges are linked to the digital transition. There is room for the proximity and social economy to invest more in this transformation. The analysis identified the need to strengthen this area and encourage the stakeholders to submit more pledges related to the digital transition.
- In particular, there is an important margin of improvement in the following action areas linked to the digital transition: 13. Access to technology, 11. Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct, 8. New business models – the platform economy, 10. Public and private tech partnerships and support and 9. Data Maturity and data driven business models. The recently published Code of Conduct for Data Sharing in the Social Economy[15] can inspire and encourage stakeholders to submit more pledges in these areas.
- It is crucial to reinforce the links with the academic sector, as no pledge has been submitted to date by the academia, universities or research organisations.
- In terms of countries, it is important to promote further the Transition Pathway for the proximity and social economy in several countries whose organisations have not submitted any pledge, namely Bulgaria, Finland, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Cyprus and Malta.

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[14] https://transition-pathways.europa.eu/pse

[15] https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7df46bca-aa41-4e40-a11c-1c0a1485b988_en?filename=EU%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Data%20Sharing%20in%20the%20Social%20Economy.pdf

4.2 Overview of the implementation of specific pledges

Social Economy Europe

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

Regarding the pledge related to raising awareness about the potential of collecting and working with SE data at enterprise and EU level, we have been working together with social tech actors by holding meetings and promoting discussions. We have also reached the target of organising events as the one we organised with Social Good Accelerator (SOGA) and other partners on 17 November 2023 entitled "Building a digital Europe for the common good: Digital Social Economy, an opportunity for European citizenship and democracy" or the workshop "Technology for the common good: the innovation we need in a democratic, inclusive and competitive Europe!" we co-organised at the EESC on March 19, 2025. We will continue organising different events and workshops to raise awareness about the digitalisation in the SE and the importance of a good use of data.

For the also related pledge Connect social economy actors with relevant common European data spaces to enable the development of data-driven business models in the social economy and support social economy enterprises and organisations to benefit from new possibilities provided by social tech (such as 'data cooperatives'), apart from the workshop organised at the EESC on March 19,2025 SEE has participated in the co-creation process of the Code of Conduct for data sharing in the social economy that was presented by the European Commission on November 28th 2024.

As co-coordinator of the LSP for the Proximity and SE ecosystem, SEE is carrying out different activities to engage the members and address the skills gap in SE as the main aim of the LSP is the up and re-skilling of the SE ecosystem workforce. The up and re-skilling of the SE workforce on digital and green skills is one of the main foci of the LSP. As co-coordinator, SEE will promote specific activities to reduce the digital and green skills gap in SE. SEE is also working on baSE project with the aim of reducing these skills gaps on digital but also in green transitions. To do so we have updated the LSP commitment to include more specific activities towards the up-skilling and re-skilling for the green and digital transitions. In the new LSP commitment we have also envisaged the creation of a Working Group on Green Skills to promote green business communities through the Large-Scale Skills Partnership (LSP) by mapping and addressing the specific skills needed in this field and promoting the exchange of good practices. For the digital transition we are working together with the Digital LSP to promote synergies and exchanges.

SEE promotes raising awareness around innovation of SE enterprises and organisations working for the Green and Digital Transitions with the biannual organisation of the European Social Economy Awards. The 2nd edition of the European Social Economy Awards took place on 14/11/2023 with 271 candidatures from 29 countries, 19 of which from the European Union. They could run for 4 different categories: skills (10% of candidatures), social innovation (57%), green transition (25%) and digital transition (8%). This year we will hold the 3rd edition of the Awards. Applications can be already submitted in the following categories: Housing, Clean Energy, Social Economy Training & Education, Local governments quality social economy action plans and Innovation in Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs):
https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/2025/03/14/european-social-economy-awards-2025-third-edition/

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

One of the challenges we can mention is that establishing KPIs can be difficult in some of the pledges as so to measure the real impact of the pledges. To solve this, we have established realistic targets that we can meet and quantify.

Regarding the digital transition, one of the difficulties for our ecosystem is to find adapted tools that are in line with SE values, and even more broadly time and skills to identify best adapted tools. And changing or embracing new tools is not only costly to install, but also to train workers and members to use them.

As to green transition, even though SE is pioneer in many fields (be it sustainable farm-to-fork and short supply chains, green energy, up & recycling, mobility...) it is complicated to identify key competences for a cross-sectorial ecosystem.

What actions have you taken so far, and how do they support the goals of the Transition Pathway?

We have taken several actions and met most of the targets we established for the different pledges as already mentioned. Another important action that we should highlight is that we have contributed to showcase good practices from the ecosystem towards the green and digital transition with the EU Institutions and other stakeholders. One of these examples was the organisation of an Intergroup event on April 16th, 2024, in which several MEPs, representatives from MS governments and high-level figures from the EU participated alongside with different SE organisations and enterprises working on fields such as green transition, energy and digitalization who showcased the added value of the SE and how it contributes to these crucial EU challenges.

Can you share any results or outcomes that show the impact of your pledge (e.g., reduced emissions, new green projects, etc.)?

We have shared the main results and targets achieved by our different pledges above. Apart from them we can share that we have contributed to raising awareness in the ecosystem, showcasing and exchanging good practices, promoting the capacity building of the SE organisations and enterprises, bridging policymakers and stakeholders, etc.

Euricse

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

With respect to the first pledge we have since published four in depth reports dedicated to specific types of bottom-up community initiatives: community enterprises, renewable energy communities, community-supported agriculture and community hubs. We have also published a practical guide for the start-up of food coops. In December 2024 we organised the first national event on enterprising communities, gathering over 100 people from all over Italy to discuss ways in which to strengthen these initiatives.

With respect to the second pledge, in 2024 Euricse organised two events, in addition to the one on enterprising communities mentioned above: a panel discussion session within the Trento Festival of Economics dedicated to Euricse's founder, prof. Carlo Borzaga, reflecting on his work and on research on social economy organisations more broadly; and a major event on the new frontiers of volunteering within the scope of the Trento Italian and European Volunteer Capital.

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

The main challenges relate to the availability of funding for research on social economy. We tried to solve them by tapping a variety of potential sources, including grants, donations and sponsorships from local and national institutions.

What actions have you taken so far, and how do they support the goals of the Transition Pathway?

Both pledges feed into the action area 4 "innovation as enablers for green transition and business development in social economy".

Our work focuses on innovative practices and models that social economy organisations adopt, such as community enterprises and renewable energy communities. These initiatives are key drivers of sustainable practices and green transition within local communities. Our research programs and projects - such as the mapping Community Enterprises in Italy, and two in-depth reports on Renewable Energy Communities and Communities in Support of Agriculture, not only expand knowledge but also highlight effective, green business models that can be scaled.

Our continuous research not only provides deeper insights into these innovative models but also reinforces the importance of fostering green, circular economies through community driven initiatives.

By bringing attention to these grassroots efforts and facilitating national events on community enterprises, and volunteering, we will contribute to the wider conversation on how social economy organisations can play a central role in driving the green transition, while, at the same time, align with the objective of fostering sustainable innovation in social economy.
Our second pledge also contributes toward action area 6 - local green deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives.

Can you share any results or outcomes that show the impact of your pledge (e.g., reduced emissions, new green projects, etc.?

Not yet.

Diesis Network

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

At Diesis Network we have made significant strides in mapping the skills needs of social entrepreneurs, particularly in the digital field, and has been involved in projects focusing on upskilling and reskilling efforts for social entrepreneurs and ecosystem stakeholders.

We continue to be actively engaged in the **Pact for Skills**, focusing on the Proximity & Social Economy ecosystem. We are also working to increase the number of competence programs specifically targeting digital skills.

Regarding **Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs)**, Diesis is promoting the creation and development of existing clusters, while encouraging collaboration and networking to support regional economies and local development.

We continue to facilitate **participation in European Digital Innovation Hubs** and to foster connections between social economy enterprises and other industrial ecosystems.

European Cluster Collaboration Platform – Euroclusters (ongoing) and Rural Pact Coordination Group – ongoing.

In terms of our own Network, we have gone ahead with the organisation of members in 4 groups, and this is work in progress:

- **Geographic collaboration clusters:** Western Balkan Alliance – ongoing to be empowered and Baltic / Eastern Partnership Alliance – to be implemented.
- **Thematic collaboration groups:** Research Alliance – undergoing and to be launched in 2nd quarter 2025 and Partnership with mainstream businesses – ongoing: we have been strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and B2B collaborations, via projects such as BUY Social, raising awareness, and creating stakeholder engagement opportunities. We have been active in promoting B2B collaborations and writing articles and news to highlight the contributions of social economy actors in the green transition.
- SETS Project: The SETS (Social Economy Transition Skills) project is a Horizon Europe initiative coordinated by us and we are advancing work within this project to co-develop and test skills development programs to support the twin transition (green and digital) for social economy organisations (SEOs). The training programmes have now been developed and tested in March and the first week of April 2025. https://www.linkedin.com/company/sets-project/
- We continue to lead work on the baSE Project: Blueprint for advanced skills & trainings in the social economy (2022-2026). The baSE Policy Lab brought together key voices to discuss how to bridge skills gaps in the social economy and support the triple transition green, digital, and inclusive! With less than 2 years left to finish the baSE Project, we are hurrying to implement all the courses piloting in each partner country, review them, collect feedback, make improvements, and deliver a great MOOC course to upskill and reskill the SE workforce in Europe, committed to equipping people with the skills needed to build a stronger and more sustainable social economy. https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/base-project/
- Through the DO Impact Project we are offering Digital and Data-Driven Solutions to empower social economy SMEs within the Proximity and Social Economy (PSE) sector to innovate, scale, and maximise their social impact, as well as offer upskilling and re-skilling in terms of digitalisation and use of data for Social Enabling Organisations (SEOs). The DO Impact survey helped us understand key learning needs of these organisations and the SME ecosystem they support and we have co-designed a learning journey which is launching in Turin during a 2-day in person workshop. A total of 8 workshops are being organised throughout 2024 and 2025, as well as DO Impact local trainings in the form of Digital and Data-driven Programs.
- By launching the Bluedots project we are progressing on collecting best practices of Blue Economy Social Enterprises (BESEs) and promoting Digital Transformation for a Sustainable Blue Economy. The project aims to empower social economy SMEs with digital tools and collaborative innovation to drive sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience in the Blue Economy.
- On May 22 and 23, Málaga will become the epicentre of innovation, sustainability, and international cooperation at the "Digital and Social Blue Economy: Sustainable Transition and Innovation Opportunities" event. Organised under the Bluedots project, this two-day transnational capacity-building event is designed to foster digital transformation, sustainability, and social innovation within the blue economy sector.

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

We are facing the challenge of ensuring widespread engagement across diverse stakeholders. This is being addressed through targeted actions like fostering B2B connections, facilitating networking, and creating opportunities for direct collaboration between social economy enterprises and private/public actors. This is still work in progress for us.
We also see as a challenge the European Commission varying levels of commitment and lack of confirmation of continued support the Proximity and Social Economy transition Pathway beyond 2025.

What actions have you taken so far, and how do they support the goals of the Transition Pathway?

We are focused on fostering upskilling, creating and promoting clusters, engaging with digital innovation hubs, and raising awareness about the role of social enterprises in the green transition. These actions support the goals of the Transition Pathway by aligning with the objectives of fostering a sustainable, innovative, and collaborative social economy.

Can you share any results or outcomes that show the impact of your pledge (e.g., reduced emissions, new green projects, etc.)?

Results include increased digital skills, a strengthened network of social entrepreneurs and clusters, and enhanced visibility and collaboration among social economy actors—all contributing to the green and digital transitions can be seen in the specific deliverables linked to the above-mentioned selected projects.

Microfinance Centre

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

The MFC organised two workshops which are grantees of Transform Together Fund project to enhance implementing green and digital solutions and to enable exchange of good practices within green and digital areas. They took place in Paris in February 2024 and in Warsaw in October 2025.

The "EMN-MFC Overview survey" was published in March 2024 and covered the topics of green microfinance and digital transformation of the microfinance sector. 4 meetings of the Technology Action Group were organised, enabling microfinance providers to build up partnership with the various private digital solution suppliers.

In 2024 MFC organised the webinar on access to finance for implementation of digital solutions as the pledge stated. It explored how digital innovations can be financed under EU policies and programs. There were discussed key opportunities and challenges as well as presented examples of beneficiaries who have advanced their operations, products and services with EU support.

In addition, MFC organised 5 webinars or workshops which promoted solutions based on digitalisation and AI and explored the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) particularly within the context of microfinance and social finance providers. Participants gained insights into how AI based technologies revolutionize the world of clients' onboarding and how these advancements can be leveraged for improved decision making, enhanced campaign effectiveness, and preparation for future AI technology trends.

MFIs and SEFPs learned about the trends that would impact their businesses, driven by societal changes and new technologies. They dived into innovations like hyper personalisation, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in marketing, Generative AI, and evolving payment methods. They also discussed the specific impact of digital transformation on Marketing, Finance, and Customer Service departments. They discussed the innovation management framework and approach to diverse innovations. They looked at knowledge-skills attitude equilibrium and discussed the reality of competence development for new ways of doing work.

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

No but it was noted that these are fast developments in offering new products and services, especially with the use of growing AI elements. [Funding Digital Innovations: Opportunities & Challenges](#)

Can you share any results or outcomes that show the impact of your pledge (e.g., reduced emissions, new green projects, etc.)?

MFC, together with Cerise+SPTF is supervising 9 social finance organisations in developing innovative solutions that are upskilling their clients coming from vulnerable groups in the area of green and digital transformation. The descriptions of the projects can be found here:

- https://mfc.org.pl/transform-together-fund/
- [Microfinance in Europe report.](#)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS4cibttITE
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AYavOJqtRs

In 2023 we created opportunity for our members to create partnership with the Tech to the Rescue and in 2024 with Verestro Virtual Mastercard cards for microfinance organisations.

Fondazione Piemonte Innova

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

Up to now, 23 non-profit SMEs have been supported to access funding for digital transitions through the "digitalisation voucher for SME" (voucher digitalizzazione PMI) promoted at local level. From the 23 non-profit local entities supported in the application process, 20 of them are receiving funding and FPI will continue supporting them during the implementation and financing reporting phases.

During 2024, Fondazione Piemonte Innova designed a strategic initiative, in collaboration with Legacoop, to support cooperatives in navigating the complexities of digital transformation. It will continue to be implemented during 2025. This initiative focuses on providing training on technological themes, equipping cooperative entities with the necessary skills to optimise their business operations, and helping them reach funding opportunities. Currently, FPI is supporting 12 cooperatives following a coaching methodology consisting of:
1. Assessment of the digital maturity level of cooperatives and analysis of their technology and skills needs.
2. Capability building programme with personalised content based on specific needs and the results of the assessment (training modules).
3. One-to-one advisory for digital transformation processes: Roadmap definition and Scouting of technology solutions.

4. More SMEs/cooperatives/associations are currently being supported by FPI through other similar advisory processes.

The Regional ICT Innovation Cluster (Polo ICT) is currently organising an event that will be held on the 15th of April (2025), and there is a plan to have the second one in October/November 2025. Moreover, through the European DO Impact project (Digital and Data-Driven Opportunities to strengthen the Social Economy Impact) started in September 2024, networking between digital SMEs that are members of PoloICT and Social Economy SMEs/non-profit organisations will be promoted through the local events starting in the second trimester of 2025.

Up to now, more than 40 meetings/training days have been organised by FPI (as technological expert and consultant for the local and national PA) with the participation of more than 80 municipalities and about 10 SMEs.

Moreover, FPI is currently organising an international online event "Partnerships for Horizon Europe" addressed to any organisation (companies, SMEs - including social economy sector-, research centres, universities, PA and clusters) interested in activating contacts and partnerships aimed at presenting proposals to the Horizon Europe calls. The purpose of the event is also to share ideas and competences related to smart cities and communities, in 3 half days. The 2024 edition of the event counted more than 400 participants.

Concerning the GDPR/compliance service related to 2025, up to now already 10 non-profit SMEs have been engaged in GDPR services and/or processes of compliance with the legislation; some of them already benefit from those services, some of them are still in the process. Also taking advantage of the opportunities on training provided by the EXPAND EDIH (of which FPI is partner).

Up to now, 5 non- profit organisations working in the social economy sector have been supported in the co-design of their digital transformation journey moving from an in-depth organisational analysis to the definition of a multi-year innovation plan and an executive project that aims to achieve results in a short term. These roadmaps have been developed within the framework of a call for proposals promoted by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo (a bank foundation), which will fund around 7 proposals. In addition, about 10 non-profit organisations have been supported in their digital transformation journey through our partnership with Salesforce.org.

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

We have not encountered any particular challenges.

What actions have you taken so far, and how do they support the goals of the Transition Pathway?

FPI is taking actions to facilitate the green and digital transition through its programmes, services and supporting activities as mentioned under question n. 1. The main areas to support the Social Economy Transition Pathway are: 1) Public and private technology partnerships and support. 2) Supporting Digital Social Innovation (DSI) & Tech for Good entrepreneurship. 3) promote Access to technology. 4) Boost digital skills by - and in the social economy; specially through the activities of the DO impact project coordinated by FPI. 5) create awareness, promote and support Innovation as an enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy.

FPI is also leading and participating in European projects linked to these purposes:

- ALPS EEN- Enterprise Europe Network: Thanks to its participation in the ALPS-EEN consortium, Fondazione Piemonte Innova offers an integrated system of services to help companies (including SMEs working in the social economy sector) identify new business, production and technology partners abroad, to support innovation and technology transfer, and to promote the participation of SMEs in European Commission-funded calls for tenders.
- DO Impact project ("Digital and Data-Driven Opportunities to strengthen the Social Economy Impact") is an initiative funded by the SMP-COSME-2023-SEED-01 call under the European Union's COSME Program. It focuses on empowering SMEs and organisations in the Proximity and Social Economy (PSE) sector by integrating digital tools and data-driven methodologies to enhance their sustainability, social value, and competitiveness.
- EXPAND EDIH: as a partner, FPI offers training services on GDPR, digital maturity assessments, technology roadmap support, access to funding services and market analysis. These actions, embracing the digital transformation, also aim to meeting climate and sustainability goals.

Rediscovery Centre

What progress have you made towards your pledge/s, and where do you currently stand?

Our food surplus cafe is now running as a training cafe and social enterprise. Since 2024 we have worked to reduce food waste and incorporate unwanted but perfectly good food from local markets and suppliers into our menu. We have developed guidelines for other cafes and are waiting for final approval by our funders before disseminating these. For more information see here.

Through our community climate action programme ECCO project we continue to support participants from any background to take action in the circular economy. We have developed nine training modules for participants in the programme and deliver these alongside site visits, hands on activities and one to one mentoring to develop capacity and knowledge of the circular economy and support the delivery of co-created community impact projects in reuse, repair or food waste. For more information see here.

We have been promoting social and circular procurement at national level by participating in dissemination events and through policy submissions. We contributed to the Governments' Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan which was published in 2024 and which included new considerations for reuse and repair, building on recommendations in our submission.

We are committed in 2025 to collecting a full data set to complete a circular impact report for the centre. In addition, we have planned to undertake training in social impact measurement and develop a wider social and circular impact reporting system, which will be supported by Salesforce.

We have widely disseminated the tools we used to develop our low carbon website.

Have you faced any challenges while working on your pledge/s? How have you tried to solve them?

- Community climate action programme ECCO project: Some key challenges are designing the right supports for participants, to best facilitate inclusion. There was no take up on our original plan to sponsor access to hot desks, so we pivoted to providing more funding toward bespoke training and project costs to help participants start their own reuse and repair community projects.

- Social and circular procurement: We had aimed to increase the number of case studies of social and green procurement projects that we have engaged in. However, the uptake of green and social clauses or criteria for projects at smaller scale (below 50,000EUR) remains slow and we have not been able to develop further case studies in this regard.
- Capturing the impact of our work - especially social impact - continues to be challenging though there is more training and collaborative work available to support this.

What actions have you taken so far, and how do they support the goals of the Transition Pathway?

- Food Rescue Cafe: In 2024 we took our commitment further by joining the EPA's national Food Waste Charter which encourages a wide range of food businesses to reduce food waste.
- Community climate action programme ECCO project: From the outset, the programme has been designed and implemented with targeted measures to engage and mobilize marginalized groups across the country. We have continued to refine the project activities to best support marginalised groups to engage in circular economy action through co-design, such as funding bespoke training to support individual participants to realise their projects in reuse and repair.
- We contributed to the Governments' Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan which was published in 2024 and which included new considerations for reuse and repair, building on recommendations from our submission.
- Our new integrated marketing system through Salesforce has enabled us to access new audiences and become more sophisticated at promoting circular economy and social economy messaging. This in turn has enabled us to lead a major 5-year communications and public engagement project with the Department of Environment to inspire, engage and enable citizens in the transition to the circular economy.

Can you share any results or outcomes that show the impact of your pledge (e.g., reduced emissions, new green projects, etc.)?

- Food Rescue Cafe: As of July 2024, we had saved a 276kg of this unwanted food.
- Community climate action programme ECCO project: To date, we have trained 41 participants and are actively supporting 55 participants in 2024/5 to take action in the circular economy.
- We have inspired other organisations, including Business in the Community to develop low carbon websites.

4.3 Interplay with other ecosystems

The particularity of the proximity and social economy ecosystem is that it is present in all sectors of activity and thus in the rest of ecosystems of the EU Industrial Strategy. This presents a relevant opportunity to reinforce synergies with other sectors of activity and shows the potential that the social and proximity economies have in encouraging also other sectors to embrace the transition towards a more resilient, innovative and sustainable economy. For example:

- **Agri-food:** The agrifood industry is a critical sector in the EU, and the proximity economy can play an important role in connecting local food producers with consumers. The social economy enterprises operating in this sector can provide fair-trade food, promote organic farming, and ensure food sovereignty. By supporting short supply chains, local food initiatives can help reduce carbon emissions, increase food security, and empower local communities.

- **Renewables:** The green transition is an area where the proximity economy and social enterprises can align with larger industrial ecosystems, particularly in renewable energy. Social economy enterprises and organisations such as energy cooperatives or community energy projects contribute to the European Union's decarbonisation goals by promoting decentralised energy production and fostering local solutions to energy poverty.
- **Health:** The integration of proximity and social economy with the health ecosystem in the context of the green and digital transition offers key opportunities such as a local, sustainable healthcare that integrates green practices, digital health solutions that ensure wider access and efficiency in healthcare delivery and social economy-driven initiatives that promote sustainability and address health inequalities, ensuring that vulnerable populations benefit from both digital and green innovations.
- **Digital:** There is a lot of potential in terms of interlinks with the digital ecosystem. On the one hand, the proximity and social economy ecosystem is key to ensure that digital technologies are accessible to all. On the other hand, the digital ecosystem offers a variety of platforms and tools that can amplify the impact of social economy initiatives through the development of platform economies.
- **Creative and cultural ecosystem:** The proximity and social economy ecosystems can harness the potential of the creative sector to enhance local job creation, business opportunities, and sustainable development and can leverage digital tools to expand access to cultural experiences and foster innovation in the creative sector.
- **Tourism:** As the digital transition advances, the tourism ecosystem increasingly relies on digital tools for marketing, customer engagement, and operations. The proximity and social economy ecosystem can take advantage of these tools to enhance local tourism development, improve accessibility, and reduce the environmental impact of tourism. On the green transition, the proximity and social economy ecosystem can play a vital role in promoting responsible tourism practices that reduce environmental impact.

In the third iteration of this report, we will further develop the assessment of the interconnections between the proximity and social economy and other ecosystems by focusing on the progress of specific pledges.