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advanCing youth and women social inclUSion in The mEditerRanean
(C_A.3.1_0014) - WP3 (O.3.2)

Market needs analysis form Spain

European Institute of the Mediterranean
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Introduction

For each Project sector the responsible partner, have to include several information in order to deliver a quantitative and qualitative analysis aimed at providing a sectors needs overview for each partner country.

Project target sectors

Green economy is a system of economic activities connected with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services that results in better human wellbeing in the long term to avoid exposing future generations to significant environmental risks and the ecologic shortage.

Circular economy refers to strategies that limit the environmental impact and waste of resources and increase efficiency at all product economy stages.

Blue economy encompasses all industries and sectors related to oceans, seas and coasts, whether they are based directly in the marine environment (e.g. shipping, seafood, energy generation) or on land (e.g. ports, shipyards, coastal infrastructures).

Sustainable agriculture is a type of agriculture that focuses on producing long-term crops and livestock while having minimal effects on the environment, trying at the same time, to find a good balance between the need for food production and the preservation of the ecological system within the environment.

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Market Needs Analysis

Blue Economy

<p>Skills and competencies young people should have to work within the sector</p>	<p>According to the results of the profiling questionnaire, these are the soft skills and competencies needed by young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University degree/professional certificate - Linguistic and communication skills - Technical skills (according to the type of professional figure) - Digital skills - Teamwork - Analytical thinking - Creativity and motivation - Technical expertise in logistics and maritime, and in project management - Innovation - Dynamism <p>Autonomy</p>
<p>Needs of the SMEs operating within the sector</p>	<p>According to the results of the Business Operators profiling, these are the needs of SMEs operating within the sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding opportunities - Training for young people that are in line with the enterprises' needs - Business support mechanisms for the recruitment of NEETs <p>Guarantee funds for the creation of sustainable enterprises</p>
<p>Potential in terms of business development and job creation</p>	<p>In 2021, the blue economy sector occupied 15,806 workers in Catalonia and generated 3,826 million euros of annual turnover, representing 4.3% of GDP and 1.4% of employment in the city. The sector holds important potential in terms of job creation, especially in the city of Barcelona. Starting from 2021, the Municipality of Barcelona destined 40.5 million euros to boost the</p>

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	<p>city’s blue economy. The plan counts on 43 initiatives and 15 projects so that the city can be an international benchmark for innovation, sustainability and quality occupation, from the maritime economy and its multiple ramifications.¹</p> <p>The plan has begun to materialize, although the bulk of the municipal intervention in this period is the renewal of the Port Olympic, which in fact is 40 million euros. According to the deputy mayor of Economic Promotion, 200 jobs will be created in the blue economy sector thanks to this initiative.² What is important, however, is that this effort should act as a magnet for significant private contributions from companies, specialised investment funds and other institutions, or from NextGenEU European funds.³</p>
<p>Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong impact on the entire coastal and maritime tourism sector which forms part of the blue economy. The impact on economic activity and the employment is evident, with the total closure of establishments and touristic activities, especially in coastal localities living almost exclusively from tourism. In a crisis scenario, a change in the tourism model and betting on new products and services that respond to the challenges of the sector is needed, enhancing social and environmental sustainability. In this context, this is an excellent moment for partnership building and cooperation of the tourism and leisure sector of the Catalan coast, with</p>

¹ <https://www.barcelonactiva.cat/es/-/barcelona-apuesta-por-la-economia-azul/1.7?redirect=%2Fes%2Ftodo-lo-que-esta-pasando-en-barcelona-activa>

² <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20201103/asi-sera-el-renovado-port-olimpic-de-barcelona-8187328>

³ <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20211015/barcelona-destinara-52000-metros-cuadrados-economia-azul-port-olimpic-12262675>

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	<p>entities, associations and cooperatives, marking lines of work and joint actions to overcome the present difficulties, but also to face the challenges ahead.⁴</p>
<p>Policies adopted concerning the development of the sector</p>	<p>For more info, see section on “Potential in terms of business development and job creation”.</p>

⁴ https://www.ecounion.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Informe_EBS_catalunya_cast_02.pdf

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Green Economy

Skills and competencies young people should have to work within the sector

From the questionnaires' results, we have been able to see that the SMEs and associations operating in the green economy sector in Catalonia believe that the following are essential skills to work in this specific sector:

- Innovation
- Autonomy
- Dynamism
- Communication skills,
- Educational background
- Team-working skills
- Self-confidence

The Forética report "Jobs 2030" identifies the 5 most in-demand green skills and competencies and the categories to which they belong:

- Sustainability (sustainable development)
- Remediation (environmental remediation)
- Risk prevention (environmental policy)
- Climate (ecosystem management)
- Renewable energy (renewable generation)

According to the report, the sectors where there is more current presence of green skills are agriculture and fishing, construction and building, and energetic industry.⁵

⁵Forética (2021), Clara Jiménez-Becerril, Marta Cámara y Ricardo Trujillo, "Jobs 2030" https://foretica.org/wp-content/uploads/informe_jobs_2030_empleo_verde_transicion_justa.pdf (accessed on 28 June 2022).

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<p>Needs of the SMEs operating within the sector</p>	<p>According to the questionnaires' results, the SMEs operating in green economy in Catalonia have different needs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to finance; - Lack of professional figures; - Support in logistics; - The issue of high taxes and charges. <p>Furthermore, during the profiling activities of the SMEs working in green economy in Catalonia, we found out that they need professional figures with the following competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regenerative economy competences - Professionals accredited by the ICF at the minimum ACC level - Professionals with broad interest in sustainability and circular economy - Project management skills - Organizational and communication competences.
<p>Potential in terms of business development and job creation</p>	<p>It is estimated that in Europe there are about 4.5 million jobs linked to the green economy.</p> <p>Of this total, Spain represents approximately 9.6%, ranking as the third largest economy in the Euro zone contributing to green jobs. According to these estimates, this number was equivalent in 2019 to a 2.5% contribution to Spanish GDP.</p> <p>Additionally, the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (PNIEC) estimates that the growth in the number of green jobs in Spain could be 1.7% in 2030, that is, between about 242,000 and 348,000 employed people per year.</p> <p>This transformation is accelerating. A correct transition towards a new green labor model that focuses on the development of</p>



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	<p>three fundamental pillars - environmental, social and economic - is needed.⁶</p>
<p>Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector</p>	<p>According to the questionnaires' results, SMEs and associations working in the green economy sector believe that the COVID-19 pandemic opened markets through the intense use of digital platforms.</p> <p>In particular one of the SMEs respondents to the questionnaire (SOLARTYS- Asociación Española para la Internacionalización y la Innovación de las Empresas Solares), explained that in their case the number of associates was maintained and the activities that were programmed were successfully carried out - although at a virtual level. However, at the level of employees, only essential personnel remained in SOLARTYS. SOLARTYS representative also explained that at the sector level, COVID-19 did not negatively affect the green sector. In fact, the solar and green sector experienced growth worldwide.</p>
<p>Policies adopted concerning the development of the sector</p>	<p>Spain has come a long way in the direction of a more sustainable and green economy. Various projects aim to promote and encourage initiatives linked to the green economy. In 2021 an important measure taken by the Biodiversity Foundation of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO), has published three new calls for aid belonging to the "Empleaverde" and "Pleamar" Programs.</p> <p>The objective of these grants is to promote the green and blue economy by creating</p>

⁶ https://foretica.org/wp-content/uploads/informe_jobs_2030_empleo_verde_transicion_justa.pdf



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jobs and companies and promoting more sustainable fishing and aquaculture activities. This constitutes an opportunity to help overcome the challenges of the crisis caused by COVID-19 and promote a fair transition towards a low-carbon and circular economy, integrating biodiversity into management and business processes to make more efficient use of natural resources.

The incentive on the part of the public administration is essential when it comes to shaping any transformation. In this sense, the objective of the “Empleaverde” Program, co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and implemented in Spain, is to promote the sustainability of economic activities in all sectors. The proposal will dedicate 9.8 million euros to training and employment projects aimed at unemployed people and support the creation of green companies for new entrepreneurs who want to work in this sector and create therefore green jobs.⁷

⁷ <https://diarioresponsable.com/noticias/31362-espana-apuesta-por-la-economia-verde-y-azul-a-traves-de-dos-nuevos-programas>

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Circular Economy

Skills and competencies young people should have to work within the sector

From the questionnaires' results, we have been able to see that the SMEs and associations operating in the circular economy sector in Catalonia believe that the following are essential skills to work in this specific sector:

- Innovation
- Autonomy
- Dynamism
- Language skills
- Educational background
- Creativity and motivation

The SMEs working in circular economy in Catalonia answered the questionnaire by saying that for them it is important to integrate in their organizations professionals with the following skills:

- Regenerative economy competences
- Digital vision
- Process automation vision
- Project management.

According to the CIRCLE Economy report on closing the skills gap worldwide, it is important to collaborate with education providers in real-time so that new training provision can be developed in parallel with innovations coming onto the market. The industry itself can also play a role in identifying the skills needed in emerging industries within the circular economy sector.⁸

⁸ https://assets.website-files.com/5d26d80e8836af2d12ed1269/608c0aa6fec4df0fa7bd78e4_20210422%20-%20CJI%20VET%20Paper%20%20-%20297x210mm.pdf

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<p>Needs of the SMEs operating within the sector</p>	<p>According to the questionnaires' results, the SMEs operating in circular economy in Catalonia have similar needs as those operating in green economy, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to finance; - Lack of professional figures; - Support in logistics; - The issue of high taxes and charges. <p>The circular economy approach offers numerous business opportunities that will gradually be covered by those companies that are able to anticipate the market and occupy reference positions in activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dismantling of products; - Recycling of materials; - Treatment of organic waste; - Generation of energy from the garbage <p>While it is true that SMEs have fewer resources to face the change to a more circular model, it is also true that due to its smaller size they have the necessary agility to adapt their structures and processes in order to occupy part of these niches.</p> <p>Despite the fact that in this transition process SMEs will likely face various barriers, among which are those related to financing and the low degree of knowledge of the circular economy both among SMEs and their customers, they also have a growing number of drivers and tools that facilitate the change.⁹</p>
<p>Potential in terms of business development and job creation</p>	<p>According to the Spanish Circular Economy Strategy "Spain 2030" (EEEC), approved by Agreement of the Council of Ministers on 2 June 2020, in the construction sector there are possibilities to reduce waste, promoting reuse and recycling, which implies environmental and economic benefits.</p>

⁹ https://www.fundacionico.es/documents/137403/0/EC_pymes_Guia_Final_Partell.pdf/5421c3aa-c862-6dbe-ae2d-1fcfe3db0df9?t=1645449359835



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There will be more jobs on waste separation and sorting of used waste materials.

In the agricultural sector, as well as all the sectors belonging to the so-called bioeconomy, the challenge is to make it possible to produce better quality food at affordable prices, guaranteeing the sustainable use of natural resources, ecosystems and conservation of biodiversity, reduction of waste, recovery of waste whenever possible and the development of sustainable food models.¹⁰

The Spanish National Public Employment Service (SEPE), through its Occupational Observatory, has carried out a prospective study of the economic activities related to the circular economy in Spain and highlights the need for the following profiles within the framework of future jobs created within this circular economy sector:

- Directors and managers of waste management companies;
- Industrial production, environmental research and development, agronomists, design, mechanical engineers, etc.
- Professionals with a university degree in occupational and environmental health and hygiene;
- Environmental protection professionals;
- Environmental education, as well as Chemists, Biologists and Geologists-Geophysicists.¹¹

¹⁰ https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/calidad-y-evaluacion-ambiental/temas/economia-circular/200714eeec_resumenejecutivo_en_tcm30-510578.pdf

¹¹ <https://empresayempleo.ulpgc.es/oportunidades-de-empleo-en-la-economia-circular/>

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<p>Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector</p>	<p>According to the questionnaires' results, the SMEs operating in circular economy in Catalonia believe that the COVID-19 pandemic opened and expanded the markets through the intense use of digital platforms. They alledge that the negative impacts of the pandemic were moderate within the circular economy sector, compared to other economic fields. The mentioned SMEs managed to sucessfully carry out the activities which were programmed (although at a virtual level). However, some of those SMEs had to reorganize their teams and keep just the essential professionals. In particular, the Catalan business company Inèdit, specified that compared to the forecast for the beginning of 2020, there was a 20% reduction in successfully completed operations.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Catalan SMEs believe that at the sector level, the COVID-19 pandemic did not negatively affect the growth of the sector as a whole. According to them, COVID-19 is the product of environmental mismanagement.</p>
<p>Policies adopted concerning the development of the sector</p>	<p>The EEEC lays the foundations to promote a new model of production and consumption in which the value of products, materials and resources remain in the economy for as long as possible.</p> <p>The EEEC establishes five axes and three lines of action to be developed through the policies and instruments that affect the circular economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Axis of action "Production": promote the design/redesign of processes and products to optimize the use of non-renewable natural resources in production, promoting the incorporation of secondary raw materials and recycled materials and

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	<p>minimizing the incorporation of harmful substances, in order to obtain products that are more easily recyclable and repairable, redirecting the economy towards more sustainable and efficient ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Axis of action "Consumption": reduce the ecological footprint by modifying the guidelines towards a more responsible consumption. - Axis of action "Waste Management": effectively apply the principle of hierarchy of waste, substantially favoring preparation for reuse and the recycling of waste. - Axis of action "Secondary raw materials": guarantee the protection of the environment and health reducing the use of non-renewable natural resources and reincorporating them into the production cycle. - Axis of action "Reuse and purification of water": promote efficient use of water resources. <p>Line of action "Research, innovation and competitiveness": promote the development and application of new knowledge and technologies to promote innovation and R&D.</p> <p>Line of action "Participation and awareness": promote the involvement of economic and social agents in general, and of citizens in particular, to raise awareness of current environmental challenges.</p> <p>Line of action "Employment and training": promote the creation of new jobs in the circular economy sector, and the improvement of existing ones.¹²</p>
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¹² https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/calidad-y-evaluacion-ambiental/temas/economia-circular/plan_accion_eco_circular_def_nipo_tcm30-529618.pdf

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Sustainable Agriculture

<p>Skills and competencies young people should have to work within the sector</p>	<p>In order to be responsible for crops and animal husbandry, knowledge about agricultural and livestock practices that respect the environment is necessary, which implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secondary school education - Subsequent specialization (Certificat de Professionalitat de la Família Agrària) - Knowledge of natural cycle of crops - Basic knowledge of economic management of small farms <p>Technical skills such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handling of agricultural machinery and tools - Preparation and dosage of soil corrections and natural fertilizer products or pest control and prevention - Caring for and feeding animals, ensuring suitable living conditions - Promotion of autochthonous varieties - Cleaning the facilities where animals live.¹³ <p>Other skills according to the stakeholders involved in A3.2.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation, dynamism, autonomy, leadership and proactivity - Specialisation in regenerative economy - Communication and linguistic skills - Digital skills - Teamwork - Analytical thinking and problem resolution skills - Creativity and motivation
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¹³ <https://treball.barcelonactiva.cat/porta22/es/fitxes/O/fitxa4998/operarioa-en-agricultura-ecologica.do>



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	<p>Knowledge of logistics and administrative processes.</p>
<p>Needs of the SMEs operating within the sector</p>	<p>The largest number of organic production (1,326) and import (122) companies is based in Catalonia.¹⁴ According to the mapping results, these SMEs expressed the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business support mechanisms and flexible economic incentives for the recruitment of NEETs - Guarantee funds for the creation of sustainable enterprises - More generally, access to finance <p>Due to their challenges in finding professional figures, in order to employ young people, SMEs would need individual or team training and/or education in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation in processing techniques - Technological innovation - Soft skills - Quality and product certification <p>Management skills or courses for business managers.</p>
<p>Potential in terms of business development and job creation</p>	<p>In this sector, you can work as an employee, or self-employed person, in cooperatives, for an institution or for an individual. It is very common to manage your own farm.¹⁵</p> <p>The potential of Sustainable Agriculture in terms of job creation appears to be</p>

¹⁴ <https://valenciafruits.com/la-pandemia-eleva-la-demanda-de-alimentos-ecologicos/>

¹⁵ <https://treball.barcelonactiva.cat/porta22/es/fitxes/O/fitxa4998/operarioa-en-agricultura-ecologica.do>



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	<p>significant. The numbers of operators in the sector has steadily grown from 2000 to 2021 in Catalonia, and more than by 11% only from 2020 to 2021.¹⁶ This increment applies to all the professional figures involved (producers, manufacturers, importers and marketers), but more distinctly producers.¹⁷ These figures are in line with the findings on the agricultural area dedicated to organic production in Catalonia, which grew in 2021 by 5.33% compared to the previous year, reaching 270.686 hectares.¹⁸ As stated in 2019 by the Advisor of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda of Catalonia, Teresa Jordà, during the past 25 years, not only have certified organic agri-food products grown and diversified, but there has also been the awakening and growth of organic food consumption in the internal market of Catalonia¹⁹, which ultimately testifies the potential of business development in this sector.</p>
<p>Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector</p>	<p>There are clear links between the potential development of pandemics such as the current COVID-19 crisis and different models of food production.²⁰ Undoubtedly, COVID-19 was a wake-up call to rethink a highly consumerist mode of development, and the ways in which we relate to nature. During the pandemic, the Spanish agri-food sector has proved to be a great social and economic bulwark, maintaining its activity during the state of emergency.²¹ As a matter of fact, the pandemic has increased the demand for organic food in the country, which is the first</p>

¹⁶ http://www.ccpae.org/docs/estadistiques/2021/01_2021_inscrits.pdf

¹⁷ http://www.ccpae.org/docs/estadistiques/2021/02_2021_inscrits_activitat.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.ccpae.org/docs/estadistiques/2021/03_2021_superficie.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/natural/20190404/461457152686/agricultura-produccion-ecologica-catalunya-evolucion-ccpae.html>

²⁰ <https://marmenorcoastal.blog/2021/04/05/entrevista-a-raquel-lujan-soto-la-agricultura-ganderia-y-la-pandemia-del-covid-19/>

²¹ <https://www.iagua.es/blogs/mariano-soto-garcia/agricultura-tiempos-covid-19>

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	<p>European producer and the fourth world producer.²² The demand for healthy eating is one of the trends that has accelerated most as a result of the health crisis of COVID-19. Given this impact, it was estimated that six out of ten Spaniards spent more money than before the pandemic on bio and "real food" or unprocessed food.²³ This positive tendency is confirmed by the mapping activities implemented, since 100% of the respondents confirm that the pandemic has impacted positively on the sector, opening markets for the use of digital platforms.</p>
<p>Policies adopted concerning the development of the sector</p>	<p>In Catalonia, natural or legal persons who are active farmers can benefit from grants from the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda (DACC) and from the Agricultural Sustainability Aid Service, in order compensates the lost profit and the increase of costs associated with practices respectful of the environment that ecological operators face.²⁴ In this framework, regulation is provided in the "Contracte Global d'Explotació", which is the integration of various aids aimed at agricultural holdings, in accordance with the provisions of Community legislation on rural development. Two types of aids are provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aid for competitiveness, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First installation of young farmers • Improving the competitiveness of agricultural holdings • Climate change mitigation on farms • Agricultural diversification. 2. Aid for sustainability, which includes:

²² <https://valenciafruits.com/la-pandemia-eleva-la-demanda-de-alimentos-ecologicos/>

²³ <https://www.agroclm.com/2021/01/14/pandemia-genera-crecimiento-de-la-demanda-de-alimentos-ecologicos-en-espana/>

²⁴ <https://web.gencat.cat/es/tramits/tramits-temes/Agricultura-ecologica>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation for areas with natural limitations or other specific limitations • Agri-environmental practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable wetland management - Management and recovery of mowing meadows - Improvement of the steppe habitats of the Natura 2000 Network - Beekeeping for the improvement of biodiversity in fragile areas - Alternative systems to chemical control for vine cultivation - Integrated production - Conservation of indigenous breeds - Fertilizer management - Cultivated biodiversity. • Organic farming • Promotion of organic livestock.²⁵ <p>In addition, in January 2022, the DACC published a new resolution calling for grants for aid to promote applied research in the field of organic agri-food production with a total budget of 150,000 euros.²⁶</p>
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Results and data of the A 3.2.1 – Sectors Needs Analysis – SEAs profiling

The IEMed conducted the Sector Need Analysis to map and profile the current situation and needs of the labour market in the four economic sectors targeted by the CLUSTER project (Green, Blue, Circular economy, and Sustainable Agriculture) in Catalonia.

The profiling activities were launched through two online questionnaires, one targeting Business Operators and SMEs and the other dedicated to Social Economy Actors (organizations, NGOs, associations, TVETs, employment

²⁵ <http://pae.gencat.cat/es/ajuts-especifics/>

²⁶ <https://govern.cat/salaprensa/notes-premsa/417143/nova-convocatoria-dels-ajuts-que-fomenten-recerca-aplicada-produccio-ecologica>

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agencies, public bodies, and others) that are relevant in one or more of the four CLUSTER project targeted sectors. Both questionnaires included the following sections:

- Organization's basic information
- Employees' profiles
- Organization's and sector's needs
- Potential involvement in the project activities

The IEMed collected the needed data thanks to 34 total responses to the two questionnaires. 24 responses came from the Social Economy Actors and 10 from the Business Operators. The IEMed collected most responses from NGOs, since we used our internal channels of the REFAL (Red Española de la Fundación Anna Lindh) to achieve the required target number of responses.

As regarding the latter type of respondents, the 24 Social Economy Actors who answered the questionnaire mainly work in the following fields:

- Social inclusion
- Youth
- Education
- Culture
- Sustainable economy

They mostly target young people within their work activities.

For what it concerns the skills that young people and women in precarious situation should have in order to find a job in one of the targeted sectors, the Social Economy Actors believe that the following skills are essentials:

- Entrepreneurship
- IT and STEM
- Innovation
- Adaptability
- Flexibility

As for the policies to be implemented in order to improve the employability of young people and women in precarious situation, the Social Economy Actors believe that the following are essential activities to be undertaken in this sense:

- Financial support mechanisms for companies to hire NEETs

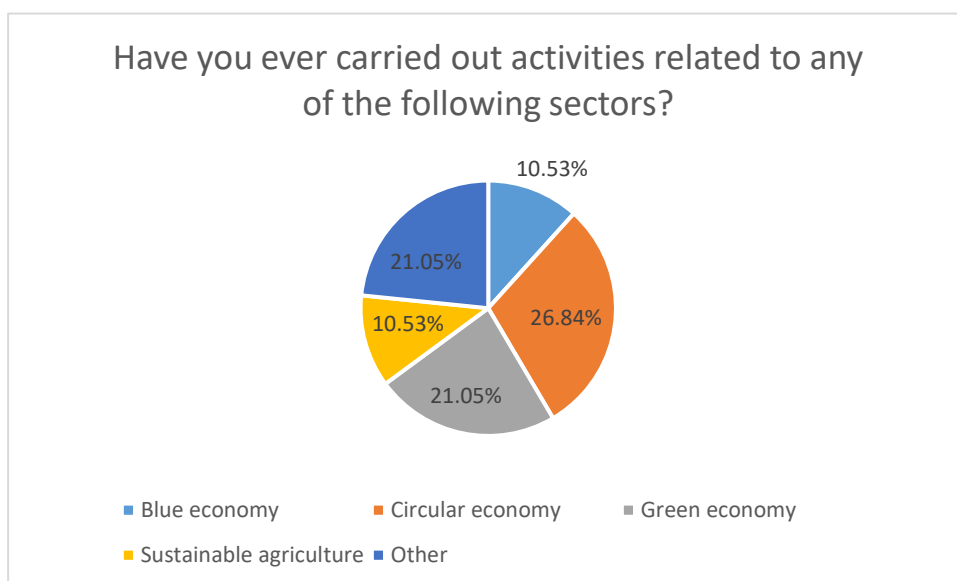
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- Training and workshops on both technical and soft skills (such as technology and STEM, but also entrepreneurship and communication)
- Personal support and educational accompaniment to NEETs
- Internships in companies

From the questionnaire's answers, we know that the majority of Social Economy Actors (26.84%) undertook activities related to the Circular Economy sector, as we can see in the chart below:



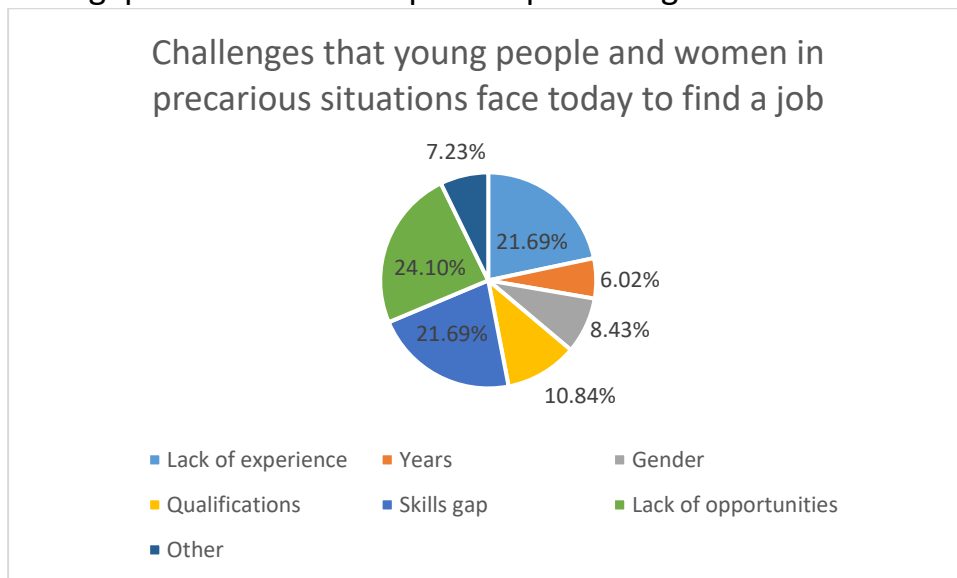
Both the Business Operators and the Social Economy Actors would train or hire young people or women in precarious situation at a percentage of 58,82%. On the contrary, the 29,41% of them wouldn't do it.

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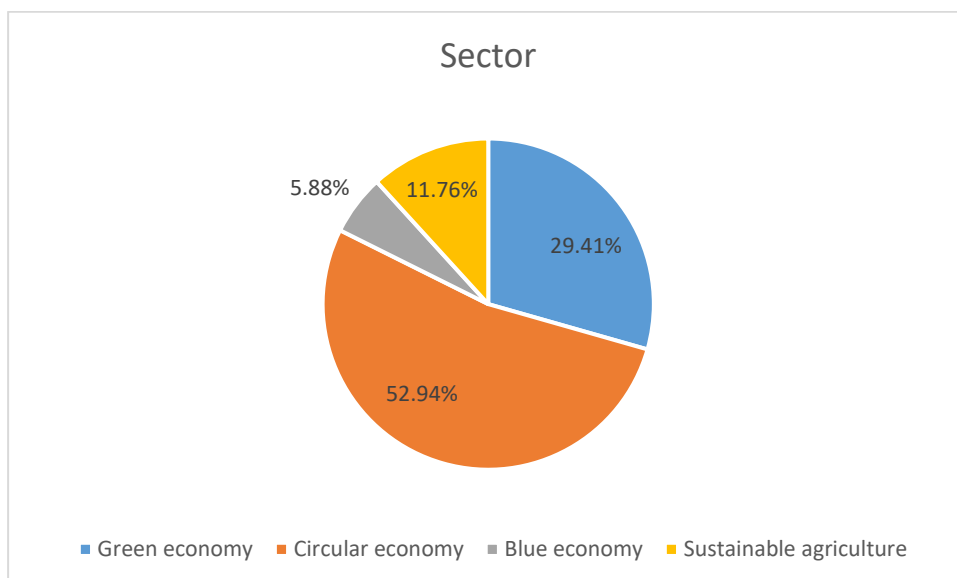


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The majority of Business Operators and Social Economy Actors (24,10%) believe that the lack of opportunities is the main challenge for young people and women in precarious situation to find a job, followed by the lack of experience and the skills gap. You can see the precise percentages on the chart below:

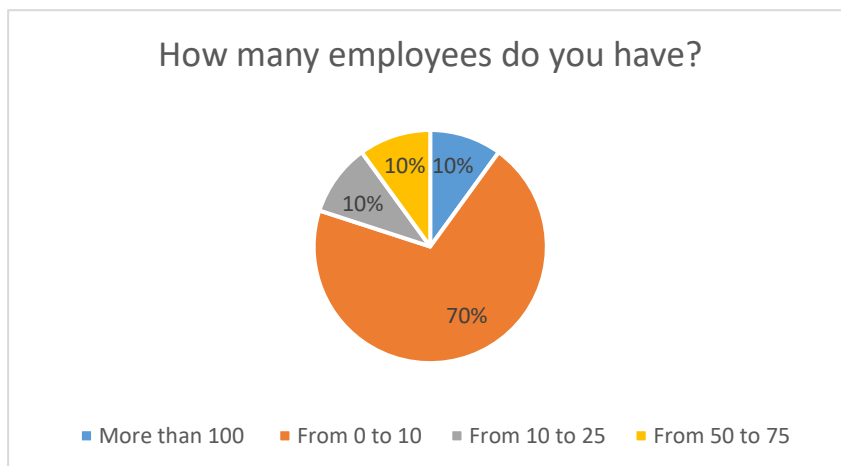


As regarding the questionnaire for Business Operators and SMEs, the IEMed collected most data from organizations working mainly on circular economy (52,94%), as we can see from the chart below:



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Out of all the SMEs who answered the questionnaire, 70% of them have between 0 and 10 employees.

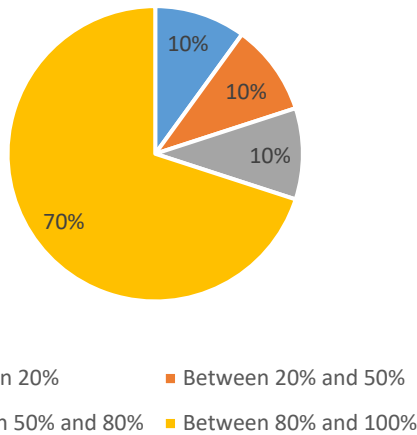


The totality of the SMEs who answered the questionnaire employ mainly people who are over 30 years old. Out of 8 SMEs, 3 have more than 50% of female employees and 5 have more than 50% of male employees. The majority of the employees (90%) working in these SMEs are university graduates and 10% of them have a high school diploma.

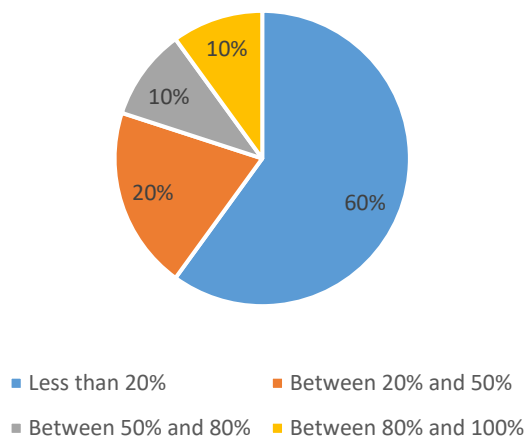
Moreover, most of the employees of the targeted SMEs work full-time, as we can see from the charts below:


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How many employees work full-time?



How many employees work part-time?



Concerning the skills gaps identified by the SMEs over the years, the main gaps are in the following areas:

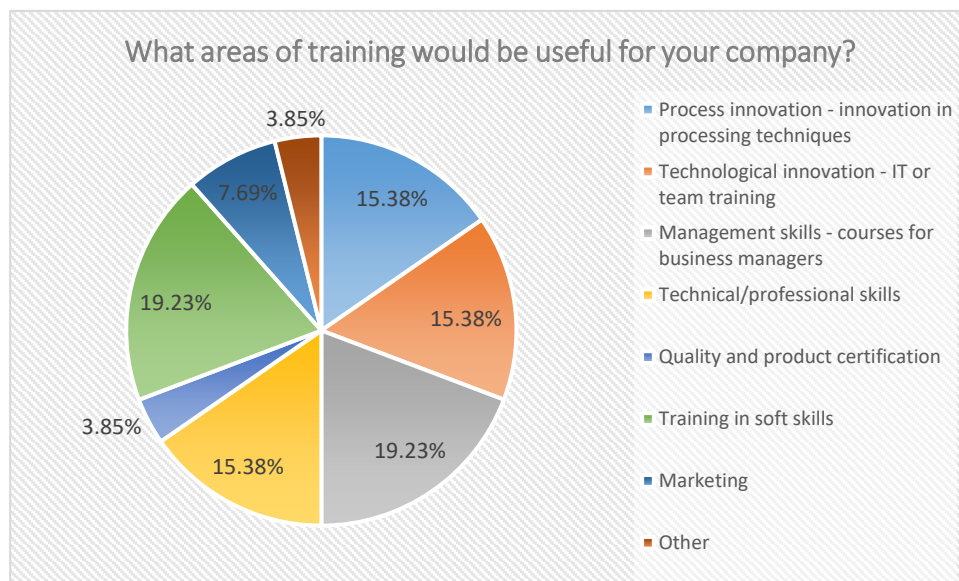
- Soft skills
- Management skills
- Marketing Skill
- Digital skills
- Analytical vision

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- Lack of specialization

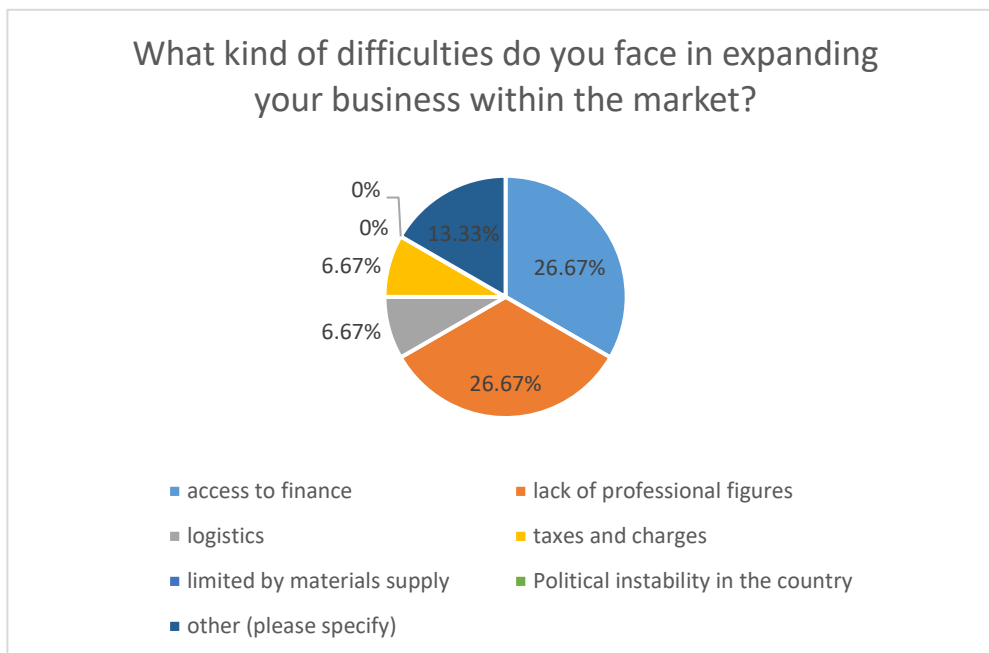
The majority of SMEs believe that the most useful trainings for their companies would be in management and soft skills, as shown in the table below:



Most of Business Operators believe that access to finance and lack of professional figures are the main difficulties they are facing in expanding their businesses within the market, as we can see from the chart below:

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Among the “other” replies, 6,67% of the Business Operators consulted believe that one of the unexplored difficulties is the change of mentality in business leadership, for which the hire of a coach is useful, while for another 6,67% the competitiveness with associations that offer services similar constitutes a challenge to business expansion.

Despite these difficulties, all Business Operators who answered the questionnaire believe that the sector(s) in which their companies operate will increase their business opportunities in the next years.

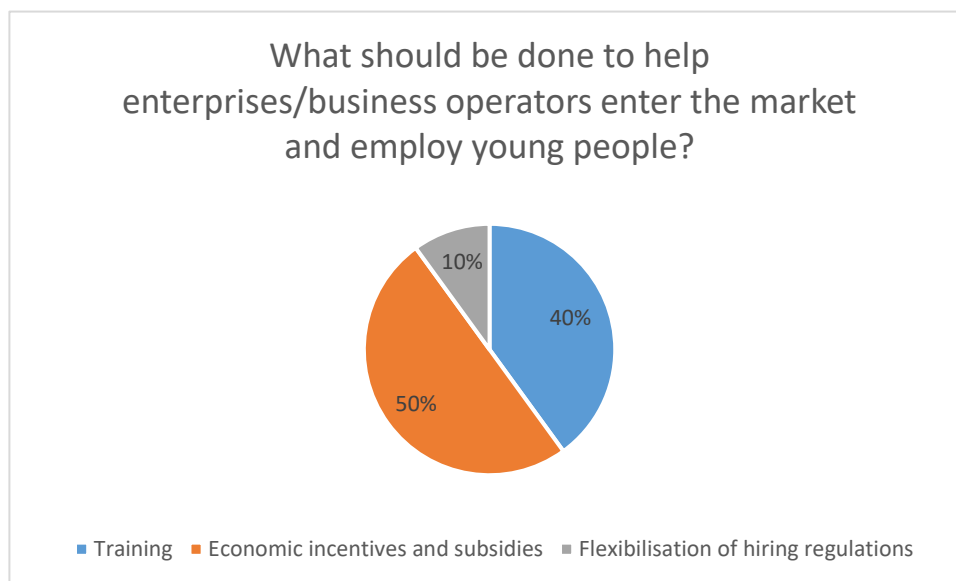
In relation to how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their business operations, the majority of SMEs believe that the pandemic has had a positive effect on their business, opening markets through the use of digital platforms, and experiencing growth worldwide. For a minority of respondents there was a drop in activities, that shortly stopped, especially face-to-face, while, in turn, digital and virtual trainings started, which allowed to suffer a moderate negative impact compared to other sectors of the economy.

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According to Business Operators, a number of initiatives could help them enter the market and employ young people, as also seen in the chart below:

- Trainings in line with the needs of the enterprises and opportunities for young people to gain work experience, for instance incorporating tutoring figures for young people to be accompanied during their incorporation in the company.
- Flexible economic incentives, subsidies towards recruitment or tax reductions if a young person is employed, especially long-term (for periods longer of 6 months).
- Flexibilization of hiring regulations.



Finally, concerning what characteristics and skills are needed from new employees, the chart below shows the relevance of the following according to the Business Operators respondents:

- Language and communication skills
- Previous experience
- Technical skills
- Digital skills

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- Education and background
- Teamwork and self-confidence
- Analytical thinking and problem solving
- Creativity and motivation

What characteristics (education, experience) and skills do you look for when you want to recruit a new employee?

