



How to develop a local ecosystem of SSE based on CitESS methodology

E-learning course material

MedRiSSE project

Replicable Innovations of **SSE** in the **provision of services** & creation of **decent jobs** in the **post covid-19** crisis **recovery**



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0. Introduction

One of the main challenges facing our societies is how to **create jobs** while **enhancing sustainable and inclusive local development** for millions of people. The SSE has proven to be a very useful model for creating quality employment while generating positive social and environmental impacts. However, in many territories the SSE network is a diverse and dispersed world that requires strategies that allow it to increase its reach. In this respect, the **CitESS methodology** constitutes a very useful **model of social innovation** to promote the **creation and strengthening of networks in the local SSE ecosystem**.

In this course, we will analyse the **benefits of developing a local SSE ecosystem** and how the **learnings from the CitESS methodology** can contribute to designing effective strategies for this purpose. We will also present a **practical implementation method** of the CitESS methodology, as well as **key contextual determinants** to consider, potential **risks** and **strategies** to face these risks.

1. Developing a local ecosystem of SSE

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) has long demonstrated its ability to promote **more sustainable, inclusive and locally anchored development** by creating quality jobs that generate positive social and environmental impacts on the community. The SSE proposes the incorporation into business practice of logics of **cooperation, mutual support and participation**, which establish fair and proportional wage scales, under **transparent, socially and environmentally responsible** practices that do not seek profit and accumulation but rather the quality of life of people and their environment.

Developing a local SSE ecosystem is about **bringing production and consumption processes closer together** to reduce the environmental impacts associated with transport and distribution and to **relocate** wealth in the territories through short channels that reduce intermediaries and revalue productive activity at source.

Historically, during periods of **crises**, there is a rise in the value placed on co-operation and solidarity. In recent crises, whether public health crises (such as the COVID-19 crisis), financial crises (such as the 2008 crisis) or natural disasters (such as the 2004 tsunami), co-operatives and wider social economy organisations were key in helping to **reconstruct their community**. Social and Solidarity Economy organisations are particularly successful in reaching out to the vulnerable groups and re-integrating them into the society, thus filling some of the voids left by the state and the market.

At the same time, developing a local SSE ecosystem may favour preventive approaches to **save future costs** or explicitly **reduce the negative externalities of economic activities**. SSE allows a better allocation of resources in the provision of some services and goods, and this is one of the reasons why regional development approaches and strategies are increasingly leveraging the potential of the Social and Solidarity Economy. Because of the specific features of social and solidarity business models, the SSE produces additional positive effects on public expenses (e.g. savings of costs), on individuals (e.g. empowerment), on territories (e.g. co-operation in local ecosystems) and on society (e.g. social cohesion).

These mitigating and prevention functions make the SSE a **natural and trusted partner** of government and civil society more generally. SSE can collaborate to complement public action in specific areas (health, social services, education, fight against poverty, work integration), which as mentioned above can be especially appreciated in times of crisis, war or epidemics, because the social economy can act quickly, develop partnerships effectively through its networks and act as a trusted partner.

In short, the SSE is a useful model for promoting a transformation of our economic model in a more socially just and sustainable direction, whether at regional, national or local level. In particular, developing a local SSE ecosystem enables local authorities to develop **stronger links with the communities** they serve through **strategic "localist" agendas** that recognise the **value of supporting local suppliers**.

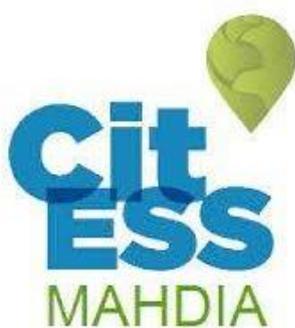
2. What is the CitESS methodology?

Despite the potential of the SSE to promote more sustainable and inclusive local development through the creation of quality jobs that generate positive social and environmental impacts, the **SSE is generally a diverse and very dispersed world**, given the multiplication of actions and actors with similar purpose and operating in the same territory. This makes it necessary to **create a common SSE territorial platform** which **pools together** and **catalyses the available public, private and civil society actors, resources and initiatives** by fostering dynamics of mutual support and cooperation and promoting a common vision of sustainable local development. It is only through such strategic collaboration and solidarity that an enabling territorial ecosystem can be put in place in order to maximize the overall impact of local SSE actions.

For this reason, the CitESS methodology aims to foster an enabling, supportive and synergistic territorial ecosystem for the development of the local SSE through the creation of a **virtual and/or physical multi-service territorial hub**. The purpose of this hub is to facilitate an **open space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration** between key territorial actors for the co-production of support services that enable the creation and development of SSE enterprises for the benefit of the whole community.

The logic behind the model is that open dialogue and strategic collaboration among key multi-sector actors allows to **catalyse and leverage available territorial resources** to offer a higher quality, better integrated and more comprehensive **support to local entrepreneurs**. The idea of the territorial platform, therefore, is to offer a one-stop shop directly at the service of entrepreneurs which connects them to the system, service, network, or organisation that can meet their needs. CitESS pole (CitESS stands for '*cit  de l' conomie sociale et solidaire*', i.e. '*city of the social and solidarity economy*'), therefore, brings together all existing local public structures already supporting local entrepreneurship, "pressures" new or existing entrepreneurial projects towards SSE principles (social and environmental objectives), and hooks such initiatives with other key territorial players and initiatives such as Universities, CSOs, and existing social enterprises already engaged in the local SSE.

Moreover, by its own collaborative nature, the CitESS model aspires to **expand and connect** with other multi-service territorial clusters in different regions to **facilitate further cooperation** and sharing of best practices, experience, skills, and resources.



The first experimentation of the CitESS model was carried out in the [Governorate of Mahdia, Tunisia](#), a country which traditionally counts on a highly centralised administrative system and where the existing public structures supporting entrepreneurship (including SSE entrepreneurs) work in silos, each governed by separate Ministries following their own programs and strategies.

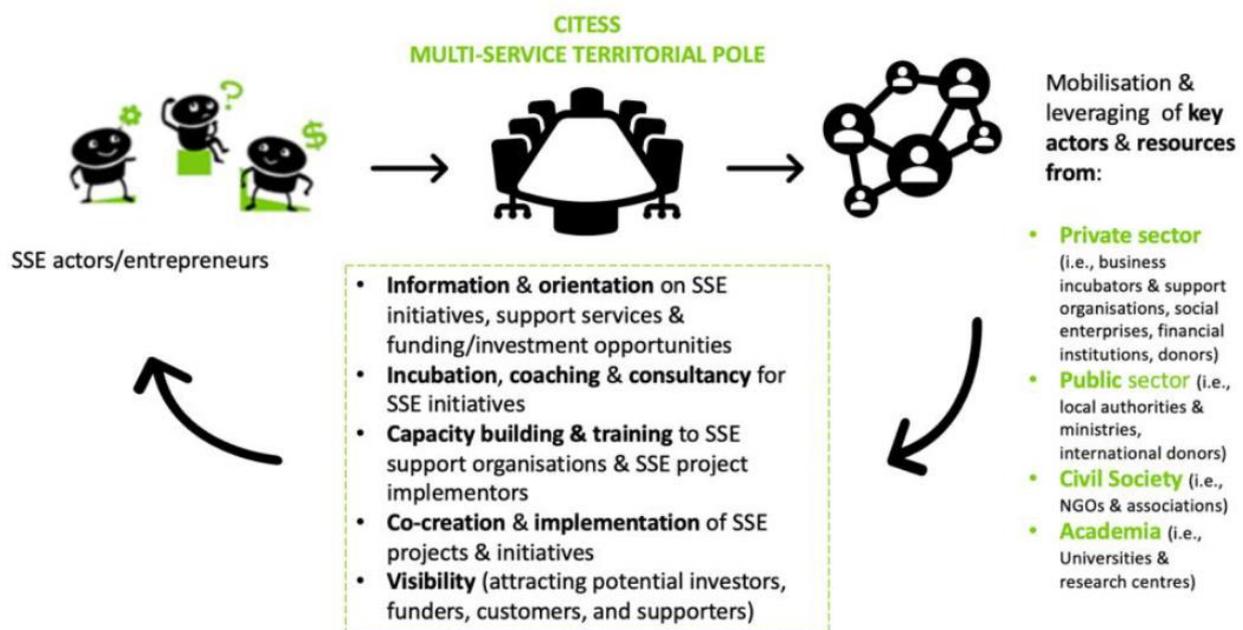
However, the original concept of the CitESS model goes back to 2013 when it was theorised by [iesMed](#)—a former European cooperative platform and member of the original MedRiSSE partnership based in Barcelona (Spain) for the promotion of the SSE in the Mediterranean—following the [MedESS Forum](#).

The pilot, hence, were set up in order to:

- Support all forms of **individual social entrepreneurship** and **collective solidarity entrepreneurship**.
- Support a **territorial dynamic** of SSE and raise **territorial awareness** on the SSE concept and culture, notably through awareness-raising activities, SSE training and advocacy, sharing of project ideas inspired by national or Mediterranean cases, organization of SSE events, etc.
- Play an active role in SSE **advocacy** at the level of the **legal framework** but also at the level of funding lines and opportunities.
- Detect **promising sectors** for the SSE and SSE **investment opportunities/niches**.

The main services offered by the CitESS pole to local SSE entrepreneurs and initiatives are the following:

- **Information** and **orientation** of entrepreneurs and SSE initiatives in order to support their access to legal support, existing training and coaching programmes, financing and SSE investment opportunities, networks, incubation spaces and other available support services that can respond to their needs.
- **Incubation, coaching** and **consultancy** for SSE entrepreneurs and actors.
- **Capacity building** and **training** for SSE support organisations (i.e. associations, Universities, vocational and incubation centres).
- Co-creation and implementation of **SSE projects and pilot initiatives**.



SSE practitioners, policymakers and local administrations searching for ways to improve the SSE in their own territories may consider replicating the CitESS model provided that key ingredients are in place and the process is well adapted to their specific context.

3. Practical Implementation Method

3.1. Key elements of the process

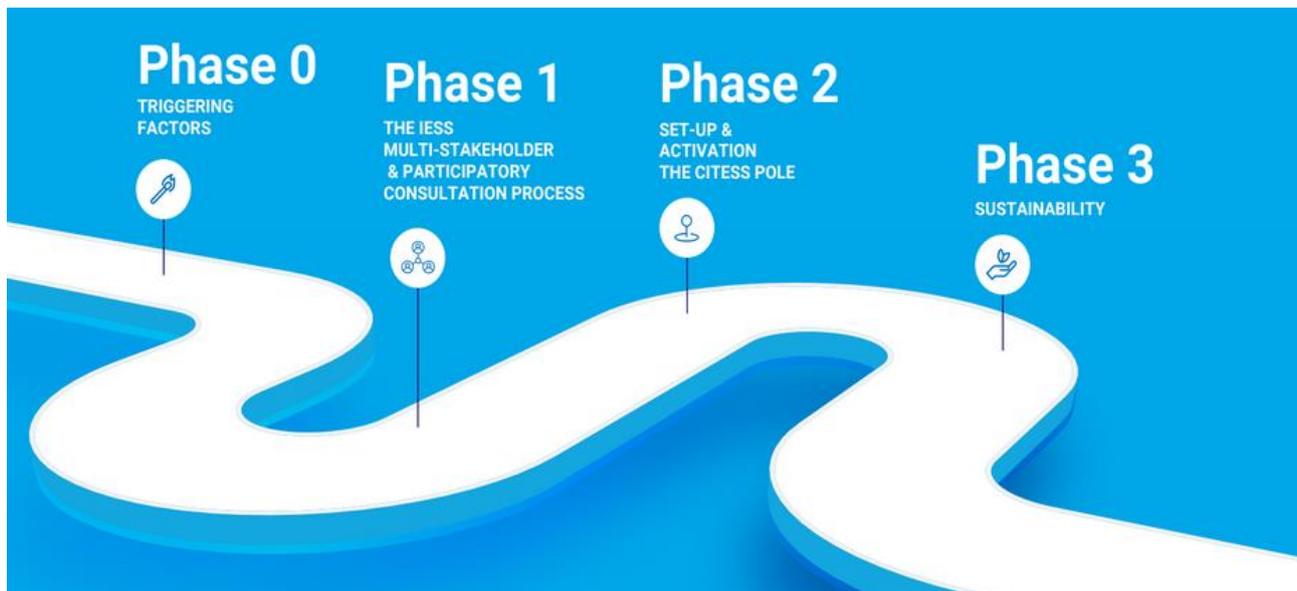
In this section we will explain the **key phases** and the respective **main actors, resources and actions** which can lead to the set-up of the CitESS pilot pole. By analysing the phases of the process, you will learn how to develop a local SSE ecosystem based on CitESS methodology. Key determinants to replicate the model, as well as potential risks and respective mitigation measures, complete the overall assessment of CitESS model for those readers who might be interested or even considering embarking on a similar experience elsewhere.

It is important to keep in mind that the contents presented in this module are only some **guidelines** that can serve as a reference to develop a local SSE ecosystem. This process will need to be adapted and implemented differently in each context, using the most appropriate ingredients available in each case.

The key elements triggering the process are:

Type	Elements
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local public authorities & institutions, Ministries & National Agencies supporting entrepreneurship in different economic sectors • SSE actors, organisations & networks • Traditional and SSE entrepreneurial training and support organizations (i.e. Vocational Training, Centres, incubation centres) • Universities • Financing organisations • Territorial facilitators • Influential and strongly motivated leaders that steer the CitESS set-up
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic networks leveraging needed resources (i.e. human resources, infrastructures, physical resources and spaces, expertise) • Existing basic public, private or civil society entrepreneurial support programs/services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources & skills (i.e. active listening, communication skills, facilitation skills, adaptability and flexibility, openness, mediation skills, leadership, long-term vision and interpersonal skills) • Social capital (mutual trust, cooperation, concertation. collaboration, openness) • Formalised, sound and multi-sector Governance • Financial resources
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary territorial assessment of SSE dynamics and potentials 2. Wide, multi- stakeholder and participatory consultation process leading to a shared and territorial definition of SSE, CitESS role & functioning 3. Information & awareness-raising activities, training & exchanges to engage and connect multi- sector SSE actors and institutions 4. Trainings & workshops to reinforce SSE support services 5. Establishment of CitESS governance structure 6. Formalisation of CitESS legal status
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Concertation space" for territorial multi-sector SSE ecosystem actors. • CitESS Governing Body • CitESS legal Association • CitESS as a recognized territorial SSE reference pole/ SSE interlocutor
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased territorial SSE knowledge and awareness by local communities & SSE actors • Improved capacities and skills of territorial SSE support organisations (from private, public, civil society sectors] • Improved mutual trust and collaboration between territorial multi-sector actors and institutions • Improved collective capacity to identify and respond to the main existing territorial problems, need and gaps • Development of an enabling ecosystem for the local SSE promoting inclusive and sustainable development
Impacts (MAIN TARGETED SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Decent work and economic growth • 11 Sustainable cities and communities • 12 Sustainable consumption and production patterns • 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions • 17 Partnerships for the goals



3.2. PHASE 0. Triggering factors



Self-assessment questions to start

To begin with, we can use the following questions as a starting point for our assessment before we start planning our strategy to develop a local SSE ecosystem:

1. Are there **SSE actors and initiatives** in your territory?
2. Are there available public and/or private **SSE support services and opportunities** in your territory?
3. Are SSE actors and public and private support organisations in your territory **dispersed or well interconnected**?
4. Are SSE actors in your territory **aware of the available support opportunities**? Do they know where to turn to when needing support for the ideation, start-up, development, scaling-up and sustainability of their enterprises?
5. Do potential investors, national or international funders, public or private institutions and organisations wishing to support SSE in your territory know whom or where to turn to in order to **reach out to SSE actors**?

3.3. PHASE 1. Multi-stakeholder & participatory consultation process

The first planning phase to the set-up of the CitESS pole consists of a **wide, multi-level, multi-stakeholder, multi-level** and **participatory territorial consultation process**. Therefore, the key actors, resources and activities in this phase are explained below.



Main Actors

Suggested actions in relation to the **main actors** to prepare the multi-stakeholder and participatory consultation process are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main actors

- ✓ In general, focus on **key actors and organisations** (from different levels and sectors) **that are already** working on entrepreneurship and bring them at a **common discussion** table to develop the SSE: avoid duplication of efforts (actors doing the same things) and synergize and capitalize on the existing.
- ✓ A strong interest, involvement, and active participation of **key local public institution and local public authorities** that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE is crucial if we want to concretise support to the SSE.
- ✓ A strong interest, involvement, and active participation of **key regional/national level institutions and authorities** (i.e. ministry-level actors, ministerial agencies) that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE is crucial if we want to concretise support to the SSE.
- ✓ Make sure you involve **key local SSE actors** (i.e. cooperatives, social enterprises, CSOs, informal groups, NGOs) and **SSE networks** to make sure the building of the CitESS and the support to the local SSE is well rooted in the local community and to the territorial real needs.
- ✓ Identify and engage key **local private SSE support organisations** that can provide first-hand information on the real needs of the community and the local SSE.
- ✓ Engaging key **Universities** and **research centres** is fundamental when working on a cultural shift towards SSE.

Self-assessment questions

1. Who are the **key public, private and academia actors** in your territory that are or can be key to promoting an enabling SSE ecosystem? What do they do? In which sector and level of intervention do they work? Are they **aware** of the other actors of the ecosystem? Are they **connected** to each other? Do they **collaborate**? Can they be **gathered** at a common discussion table? Are they **willing to cooperate**?
2. Which are the key **local institutions and local public authorities** in your territory that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE? How can you effectively engage them and ensure their active participation to the discussion table?
3. Which are the key **regional/national level institutions and authorities** in your context (i.e. ministry-level actors, ministerial agencies) that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE? How can you effectively engage them and ensure their active participation to the discussion table?
4. Which key **local SSE actors** (i.e. cooperatives, social enterprises, CSOs, informal groups, NGOs) and **SSE networks** should you actively involve in the preliminary consultation process? Which key actor can best inform you on the real needs of the community?
5. Are there available **local private SSE support organisations** in your territory? How can you effectively engage them to gather key information on the real needs of the community and the local SSE?
6. Which key **Universities** and **research centres** could you engage in the preliminary consultation process to support the discussion on the importance of promoting the SSE?



Main Resources

Suggested actions in relation to the **main resources** to prepare the multi-stakeholder and participatory consultation process are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main resources

- ✓ **Human resources and personal skills and attitudes** of involved individuals are key to a successful, wide, and participatory consultation process. The latter builds on crucial human skills, such as **active listening, communication skills, facilitation skills, adaptability and flexibility, openness, mediation skills, leadership, long-term vision, and interpersonal skills**. Most importantly, individuals' **true motivation and willingness to collaborate and to make this experience work** is the ultimate success factor at this stage.
- ✓ It is important to have **influential and strongly motivated leader** sitting at the discussion table that can steer the consultation process leading to the CitESS set-up. Better if not representing public administrations or institutions, these leaders must be personally involved and really interested in the process, highly committed, and sufficiently charismatic to animate the discussion table.
- ✓ **Social capital** is a crucial resource allowing stakeholders to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose, building on **mutual trust, cooperation, concertation, collaboration, openness, respect for one another**.
- ✓ **Financial resources** are needed to support the work to be carried out by the staff team to steer and facilitate the consultation process.

Self-assessment questions

1. *Who are the right individuals in your territory to engage in a wide and participatory process for the set-up of a CitESS? Do they have the **necessary skills** to dialogue, collaborate and connect with other key stakeholders of the ecosystem?*
2. *Is there an **influential and strongly motivated person** that can take up the **leading role** throughout the consultation phase and the overall process of setting up the CitESS?*
3. *Can your territory count on a certain level of **social capital** allowing these different key stakeholders to trust each other to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose?*

4. Can you intercept sufficient **financial resources** to support the work done by the staff team to steer and facilitate the consultation process?



Main Activities

Suggested actions in relation to the **main activities** to prepare the multi-stakeholder and participatory consultation process are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main activities

- ✓ A **preliminary territorial assessment** should previously inform any feasibility consideration of setting up a CitESS in a given region. It is important to assess and consider the **dynamics of the SSE actors** of the territory (i.e. development and dynamism of the associative groupings); the existence or absence of **enabling legal frameworks**; the **social needs and problems** (i.e. access to drinkable water, education, healthcare, cultural life); the **multi-actor dynamics** and **support organisations**; the **existing supply chains** which could be opportunities for the local SSE.
- ✓ Build the **embryonic informal stakeholder network of the CitESS** by bringing together all territorial key stakeholders - public, private, Academia, and civil society actors - at the common discussion table.
- ✓ Make sure you can promote a proper **dialogue and listening space** for the informal stakeholder network where all actors can acknowledge diverse realities and point of view concerning the SSE ecosystem in your territory.
- ✓ A delicate and essential step is the **common definition and sharing of the SSE framework** with local actors. If not framed in a broader strategy of territorialization starting from the key local SSE actors, a CitESS risks being a top-down operation. Make sure that the pole serves the territorial context and are designed directly by the local actors themselves.
- ✓ Drive collective debate and dialogue among key actors in order to agree over the **location, role and functioning of the CitESS**.
- ✓ Create and foster a **climate of trust, openness, cooperation** and **dialogue** among actors of a territory that are or can be key to the development of an enabling SSE ecosystem: ensure all actors acknowledge that **cooperation** is a **win-win situation** for all.
- ✓ Work towards **breaking silos** and **building mutual knowledge** between key SSE ecosystem actors and their potential.
- ✓ Promote dialogue between key public and private actors to improve the collective capacity to identify what are the main **territorial problems, needs** and **gaps**.

Self-assessment questions

1. Can you access reliable **data and information** providing you with a comprehensive overview of the territory that could benefit from hosting the CitESS pole? What are the **dynamics of the SSE actors** of the territory? (i.e. development and dynamism of the associative groupings) Are there **enabling SSE legal frameworks** in place? What are the main territorial **social needs and problems**? (i.e. access to drinkable water, education, healthcare, cultural life) What are the **multi-actor dynamics** among SSE actors and support organisations? Which are the **existing supply chains** which could be opportunities for the local SSE?
2. Which is the best way to **bring together** all territorial key stakeholders - public, private, Academia, and civil society actors - in your context? How can you effectively engage them in an **informal stakeholder network** building the CitESS set-up?
3. How can you promote a proper **dialogue and listening space** allowing to **acknowledge the different SSE ecosystem actors' realities** and point of view and to promote **mutual understanding**?
4. Can a **shared definition of SSE** suiting your territory be collectively identified and agreed upon among key ecosystem actors? Do **international definitions** adapt to our territory?
5. Building on the results of the preliminary territorial assessment and on the mutual dialogue promoted through the informal stakeholder network, **which location** can really benefit from **hosting the CitESS pole**? What should be its **main role** and **function**?
6. Is there a climate of **trust, openness, cooperation and dialogue** among actors of your territory that are or can be key to the development of an enabling SSE ecosystem? Can it be created or strengthened? Do the actors of your territory acknowledge that **cooperation** is a **win-win** situation for all? Can this perspective be promoted, understood, and adopted?
7. Do the (current and potential) SSE key actors of your territory know about each other, their activities the resources and networks they can deploy, leverage and share? Can mutual **knowledge and networking** be fostered?

8. Is there a **common space for dialogue and reflexion** in order for key public and private actors to **collectively identify** what are the existing main problems, needs and gaps in your territory?

3.4. PHASE 2. Set-up & activation the CitESS pole

The second phase for the creation and activation of the CitESS cluster will consist of **enlarging the circle of organisations and actors engaged in the platform**, beyond the key actors already committed in the first phase of consultation. Therefore, the key actors, resources and activities in this second phase are explained below.



Main Actors

Suggested actions in relation to the **main actors** to set-up & activation the CitESS pole are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main actors

- ✓ Existing public, private and civil society territorial **entrepreneurial support organisations** are key targets when promoting and disseminating SSE culture and improving SSE support infrastructure.
- ✓ Map, identify and engage in the CitESS pole all strategic public and private -for profit and non-profit- actors to make sure the support to the local SSE is **well rooted in the local community** and to the territorial real needs.
- ✓ Hands-on, competent, and dynamic **facilitators** are key to ensuring the good implementation of the activities (i.e. trainings, meetings, facilitation of exchanges and promotion of tools and seminars) and to encouraging the sharing of responsibility and participation of the various actors.

Self-assessment questions

1. Who are the **main public and private actors** -for profit and non-profit- that are working to support entrepreneurship in your territory and can be key to promoting an enabling SSE ecosystem? What do they do? In which sector and level of intervention do they work? Do they need support to strengthen their capacities? Can they be engaged in the CitESS?

2. Which are other public and private -for profit and non-profit- **actors that you can engage** in the CitESS platform in order for it to pursue its purpose?
3. Can you count on a **hands-on, competent and dynamic team of facilitators** leading the networking process and coordinating all activities to set-up the CitESS? (i.e. trainings, meetings, facilitation of exchanges and promotion of tools and seminars)



Main Resources

Suggested actions in relation to the **main resources** to set-up & activation the CitESS pole are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main resources

- ✓ **Human resources** and **personal skills** and **attitudes** of involved individuals are key to the CitESS set-up process. The latter builds on crucial human skills, such as **active listening, communication skills, facilitation skills, adaptability** and **flexibility, openness, mediation skills, leadership, long-term vision** and **interpersonal** skills. Most importantly, individuals' **true motivation and willingness to collaborate and to make this experience work** was the ultimate success factor also at this stage.
- ✓ **Social capital** is a crucial resource allowing stakeholders to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose, building on **mutual trust, cooperation, concertation, collaboration, openness, respect for one another**.
- ✓ **Strategic public and private networks** are key to leveraging **crucial resources** (i.e. human resources, infrastructures, physical resources and spaces, expertise) needed to improve or create SSE support services or projects. Hence, when formalising the CitESS governing body, make sure you can count on members who can leverage such strategic networks and resources.
- ✓ **Financial resources** are needed to carry out the information and awareness-raising activities, trainings to SSE support organisations and exchanges to engage and connect multi-sector SSE actors and institutions.

Self-assessment questions

1. Who are the right individuals in your territory to engage in the set-up of a CitESS? Do they have the **necessary skills and incentives** to dialogue, collaborate and connect with other key stakeholders of the ecosystem?

2. Can your territory count on a certain level of **social capital** allowing these stakeholders to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose?
3. When formalising the CitESS governing body, can you secure the membership of key actors who can leverage **strategic networks and resources** to improve/create SSE support programs and services?
4. Can you intercept sufficient **financial resources** to support the activation of the CitESS pole?



Main Activities

Suggested actions in relation to the **main activities** to set-up & activation the CitESS pole are as follows:

Suggested Actions regarding Main activities

- ✓ Identify key SSE of SSE support organisations/actors/ initiatives in your territory to be engaged in the CitESS and **foster connection/networking among these SSE actors**.
- ✓ Promote a preliminary and informal structuring of the pole by co-elaborating a **charter formalising CitESS values, principles and commitments** of involved public and private actors.
- ✓ **Reinforce existing SSE support services** and promote the implementation of **new missing services** through ad-hoc trainings and workshops.
- ✓ Facilitate **exchanges** and promote the **sharing of existing experiences** of SSE support services, SSE business ideas as well as experiences of SSE clusters in other territories or abroad.
- ✓ Promote the establishment of the CitESS multi-actor (public-private) **governance structure** and formalise the network into a **suitable legal form**.

Self-assessment questions

1. Which are the key **SSE experiences and actors** in your territory? How can they be **connected**?

2. *Could these actors benefit from a co-elaborated definition of a **charter of principles** formalising shared values, principles, and commitments within the CitESS?*
3. *Could existing **SSE support services** benefit from **capacity building** and **skill-strengthening support**? Are there **missing services** they could offer? Should they be supported with **ad-hoc trainings**?*
4. *Could your SSE ecosystem benefit from **exchanges and sharing of other existing experiences** concerning SSE support services, SSE business ideas as well as experiences of SSE clusters in other territories or abroad?*
5. *What kind of **governance structure** could benefit the CitESS in your territory?*
6. *Which available legal form in your territory could best **reflect CitESS nature and values** allowing for good and long-lasting governance?*

3.5. PHASE 3. Ensuring sustainable support to rural value chains

In this phase we will focus on identifying the key measures that can be implemented to **promote the sustainability** of the CitESS multi-service pole. For this purpose, we will classify these measures according to financial sustainability, institutional sustainability, technical sustainability and social sustainability.

Financial Sustainability

Suggested Actions for Financial Sustainability

- ✓ Questioning the financial sustainability of the CitESS pole is crucial and should be voiced and debated since the initial consultation phase. It is **fundamental to diversify funding** and avoid depending on public financing or international cooperation donors. For this reason, a CitESS pole needs to rely on a more **viable and mixed economic model**. One solution is to develop and **offer SSE support services** which are attractive to clients (i.e. SSE actors, public or private actors) in order to secure a **self-financing** channel.

Self-assessment questions

1. Which How can you ensure financial sustainability of the CitESS in your territory? Is there a possibility to **diversify funding** and avoid relying only on public financing or international cooperation donors? Are there **SSE support services** that can be **attractive to SSE actors** in your territory and that can ensure a self-financing channel to support the CitESS? How can you ensure such services do not compete with existing ones?

Institutional Sustainability

Suggested Actions for Institutional Sustainability

Formalisation and **Institutionalization** are essential for sustainability:

- ✓ Firstly, set up an **effective governance** of the CitESS including all the key multi-sector territorial actors and stakeholders and guaranteeing an effective, yet inclusive, democratic, and participatory decision-making process and management.
- ✓ Secondly, **formalizing CitESS role, objectives, pursued values, and governance structure is key to ensuring lasting structures, strong participation, long-term functioning, and good governance of the pole**. Opt for a **legal form which best reflects CitESS nature and values** and allows for good and long-lasting governance (i.e. cooperative, association). Make sure such legal form allows **to involve key territorial actors** coming from the public, private, Academia and civil society sectors.

Self-assessment questions

1. What kind of **governance structure** could benefit the CitESS in your territory in order to guarantee an effective, yet inclusive, democratic, and participatory decision-making process and management?
2. Which available legal form in your territory could and best **reflect CitESS nature and values** allowing for good and long-lasting governance?

Technical Sustainability

Suggested Actions for Technical Sustainability

- ✓ Work to **strengthen existing entrepreneurial support structures**, especially **public ones**, as a way of ensuring that the new skills acquired are retained by the territorial institutions.
- ✓ When **multi-actor and multi-sector collaborations** prove to be successful, actors are more likely to pursue and replicate a collaborative approach in the long run. Make sure you effectively support, foster and advocate successful multi-actor and multi-sector collaborations in your territory.

Self-assessment questions

1. How can you **strengthen existing entrepreneurial support structures**, especially **public ones**, as a way of ensuring that the new skills acquired are retained by the territorial institutions?
2. Should **connections** and **collaborations** established among public-private stakeholders in your territory prove to be successful, how can you best ensure they will continue in the future? How can you ensure they have wide **visibility** to inspire other collaborations?

Social Sustainability

Suggested Actions for Social Sustainability

- ✓ Creating and fostering **strong and rooted links with the territory and with local actors and communities** is key to CiteSS sustainability. For this reason, it is essential to map and address the community's real needs and issues, **focus on actors who are already existing and active in the territory**, **connect** them together and create **synergy** at different levels and sectors.

Self-assessment questions

1. How can you create and foster **strong and rooted links with your territory and with local actors and communities**?

4. Key contextual determinants

When trying to adapt the process we have explained to different local realities, it is essential to take into account some specific aspects or **contextual determinants**. These contextual determinants are **elements that may be useful to consider** in order to assess the preliminary feasibility of considering implementing the practice.

4.1. Social context



Key determinants

- **Social capital** is a crucial resource allowing public and private sector actors to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose, building on **mutual trust, cooperation, open dialogue, respect for one another**.

Self-assessment questions

1. *Can your territory count on a certain level of **social capital** allowing key territorial stakeholders to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose?*

4.2. Resources



Key determinants

- **Financial resources** are needed to set up and manage the CitESS. The model foresees a mixed economic model drawing resources from **public financing, funds from international cooperation donors** (i.e. EU Commission) as well as **invoicing of support services offered to SSE actors**. The public local/national funding or international cooperation funding that CitESS intercepts is put at the services of its territory, therefore allowing a strategic channelling and redistribution of resources towards local SSE initiatives which, in turn, allow for greater economic and social returns to the benefit of the community as a whole.
- **Human resources** and **personal skills** of engaged and truly motivated individuals are key to a successful, wide, and participatory CiteESS set-up and management. The latter builds on crucial human skills, such as **active listening**,

communication skills, **facilitation** skills, **adaptability** and **flexibility**, **openness**, **mediation** skills, **leadership**, **long-term vision** and **interpersonal** skills.

- **Influential** and **strongly motivated political leaders** that can steer the process leading to the CitESS set-up. Better if not representing public administrations or institutions, these leaders have to be personally involved and really interested in the process, highly committed, and sufficiently charismatic to animate the discussion table.
- **All key economic hard infrastructures** needed by the SSE actors to be operative, such as the marketplace, transportation and communication infrastructures, power grid and water supply network, etc., allowing them to produce, purchase and exchange resources, products, and services.
- Existing basic public, private or civil society **entrepreneurial support programs/services** should already be in place for CitESS model to be experimented in a given territory. By its own nature, CitESS primarily catalyses, connects, leverages, and improves existing resources and support programs for the local SSE, albeit it can promote also new services. In fact, while CitESS is not meant to be primarily a direct support service provider, it is indeed a platform facilitating the integration and co-production of support services as well as strategic matchmaking with actors in need for such services.
- **All services** needed by the SSE actors to be **operative** in their market: i.e. commercial services, transport and export logistics, informatics, legal and technical support, research and development, patent and licencing, advertising.

Self-assessment questions

1. *Are there financial resources coming from **public financing and international cooperation donors** that can be intercepted to set up and manage the CitESS, and channelled by the latter toward local SSE initiatives? Moreover, which missing SSE support services can be offered to SSE actors to also secure **CitESS self-financing income**?*
2. *Who are the right individuals in your territory to engage in a wide and participatory*

process for the set-up and management of a CitESS? Do they have the **necessary skills and motivation** to dialogue, collaborate and connect with other key stakeholders of the ecosystem?

3. Is there an **influential and strongly motivated political person** that can take up the **leading role** throughout the overall process of setting up the CitESS?
4. Can SSE actors in your context count on existing and functioning **key economic hard infrastructures** to be operative? (i.e. marketplace, transportation and communication infrastructures, power grid and water supply network)
5. Are there basic public, private, or civil society **support programs/services for entrepreneurs** in your territory? Are they effective? Where do entrepreneurs in your territory turn to when needing support for the ideation, start-up, development, scaling-up and sustainability of their enterprises?
6. Which are the **key services** your SSE actors need to be **operative**? Are they available in your context? (i.e. commercial services, transport and export logistics, informatics, legal and technical support, research and development, patent and licencing, advertising)

4.3. Actors and organisations



Key determinants

- **Local public authorities and institutions** (i.e. Municipalities) supporting entrepreneurship and the SSE in different economic sectors.
- **Ministries and National agencies** supporting entrepreneurship and the SSE in different economic sectors.
- Dynamic, skilled, and committed local **entrepreneurial support organisations** (public and private – for-profit and non-profit) such as vocational training centres and incubation centres.

- **Local SSE actors** (i.e. cooperatives, social enterprises, CSOs, informal groups, NGOs) and **SSE Networks** that can inform CitESS on the real needs of the community and could benefit from CitESS support.
- **Universities & research** centres that are committed to researching and supporting the SSE.
- **Financing organizations** (i.e. national or international public institutions, cooperation agencies, donors) supporting and promoting SSE.
- It is necessary to set up an **effective formalized governance** where the **Governing Board** includes organisations and/or individuals coming from/representing **public institutions, Universities, civil society, SSE** and the **private sector**. Such rich diversity of the Governing Board can ensure strong **multi-sector linkages** which can open doors to facilitate **collaborations**, unlock **strategic networks** and leverage needed private, Academia, public or civil society resources to actually materialise successful SSE support programs. Moreover, the governance structure should guarantee an effective, yet inclusive, democratic, and participatory decision-making process and management of the CitESS.

Self-assessment questions

1. Who are the main **local public authorities** and **institutions** in your territory that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE? Can they be engaged in a model like CitESS? Would they be willing to collaborate with the private sector, civil society actors and academia to strengthen/improve the territorial support to SSE initiatives?
2. Which are the **key national level institutions** and **authorities** in your context (i.e. ministry-level actors, ministerial agencies) that are supporting/can support entrepreneurship and the SSE? Can they be engaged in a model like CitESS? Would they be willing to collaborate with the private sector, civil society actors and academia to strengthen/improve the territorial support to SSE initiatives?
3. Who are the main **public and private actors** -for profit and non-profit (i.e. cooperatives, social enterprises, CSOs, informal groups, NGOs) - that are working

to support entrepreneurship in your territory and can be key to promoting an enabling SSE ecosystem? What do they do? In which sector and level of intervention do they work? Do they need support to strengthen their capacities? Can they be engaged in the CitESS?

4. Which key **local SSE actors** (i.e. cooperatives, social enterprises, CSOs, informal groups, NGOs) and **SSE networks** can best inform you on the real needs of the local community? Which key local SSE actors could benefit from CitESS support?
5. Which **key local Universities** and **research centres** could you engage in the CitESS set-up and management to support the community's cultural shift towards the SSE?
6. Which key **national** or **international financing** organizations (i.e. public institutions, cooperation agencies, donors) could you engage in the CitESS to support and promote SSE in your territory?
7. Which key public, private, Academia and civil society individuals/organisations could join the CitESS **Governing Board** in your territory? Can they facilitate collaborations, unlock strategic networks and leverage needed resources to put
8. What kind of **governance structure** could benefit the CitESS in your territory in order to guarantee an effective, yet inclusive, democratic, and participatory decision-making process and management?

4.4. Networks



Key determinants

- Building **strong and strategic networks** is undoubtedly among the most fundamental resources that a CitESS model can count on. Engaging multi-sector and multi-level actors and organisations from the Public, private, Academia and civil society sectors allows CitESS to access their respective networks, therefore being able to **leverage, connect and catalyse all the needed resources** to support entrepreneurs and SSE initiatives in a given territory. Hence such

strategic networks are key to setting up the CitESS platform facilitating the integration and co-production of support services.

Self-assessment questions

1. Which **strategic networks** do you need access to in order to leverage the needed resources (i.e. human resources, infrastructures, physical resources and spaces, expertise) to support entrepreneurs and SSE initiatives in your territory?

5. Drawbacks and risks

Some of the main risks which may arise during the process, as well as some recommended strategies to mitigate them, are as follows:

5.1. Governance risks

Speeding up too fast the formalization process of the CitESS may **hamper its governance and management** if the proper grounds for effective cooperation are yet to be consolidated. For example, in **places where the associative culture is not strongly rooted**, opting for the associative form may be a premature and **hazardous step**. Prominent local actors may take the overall initiative and, while on the one hand this guaranteed ownership and positive boost to the process, on the other hand it may generate **frictions** when it comes to concretize (i.e. electing the governing board) a **participatory governance** that limits the concentration of decision-making power.

Coping strategy 1: Avoid premature formalization

It is recommended **not to prematurely accelerate the formalization** of the CitESS. Conversely, it is recommended to work first on creating and developing the concept, act, connect and mobilize actors and organisations and then, when and if this works, **cautiously steer towards formalization**.

Coping strategy 2: Choose a suiting legal form and membership

To avoid governance risks, it is suggested to consolidate a **multi-sector membership of the Governing Board** and opt for a **legal form** which can work well within the **existing local culture**. Strong leaders are needed to steer and boost the CitESS set-up but can hamper the CitESS governance if reluctant to share the decision-making power.

5.2. Economic dependency

Too much **reliance on international cooperation donors** can hamper the economic sustainability of the pole and increase its **vulnerability** in case of **political changes**.

Coping strategy: Diversify funding and opt for mixed economic model

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the CitESS pole is crucial and should be considered and debated since the initial consultation process. It is **fundamental to diversify funding and avoid relying only on public financing and international cooperation Donors**. For this reason, a CitESS pole needs to rely on a more **viable and mixed economic model**. One solution is to **develop and offer support services** which are attractive to clients (i.e. SSE actors, public or private actors) in order to guarantee a **self-financing** channel. However, this depends also on the type of organization in which the CitESS is formalized.

5.3. Risk of a top-down process

If not framed in a **broader strategy of territorialization** stemming from the key territorial SSE actors, a CitESS risks being a top-down operation. It is necessary to work so that the pole fits into the territorial context and that they are designed directly by the territorial actors themselves.

Coping strategy: Favour a community-owned CitESS model

It is crucial to properly frame the CitESS set-up in a **broader strategy of territorialization** stemming from the key territorial SSE actors. A delicate and essential step is facilitating stakeholders' agreement over a **common and owned definition of SSE and of a CitESS charter of principles** which suits the **territory**, its **context** and its **communities**.

6. Case study



IESS! Employment Initiatives in the Social and Solidarity Economy for job creation through SSE

iESS! was implemented in Tunisia. It sought to promote sustainable employment opportunities, especially for youth and women, by **creating and strengthening the network of SSE enterprises** in 4 Tunisian provinces. iESS! operated at 3 levels: micro, meso and macro.



In this case study, we will focus on the macro level, as this is the level that consists of setting up support structures for the SSE, with **two multi-service territorial support centres (CitESS)** in Sidi Bouzid and in Mahdia to support the local SSE organizations through various services including funding and networking, and four coworking and incubation spaces (known as Lingare) in 4 Tunisian regions.

One of the project's indirect achievements is the **Tunisian framework law on the SSE** in 2020, a policy achievement for which the project's consortium partners and SSE community lobbied actively. However, the law's application decrees have not been issued to date, leaving room for advocacy efforts to operate.

The CitESS, a **SESO with built-in social innovation potential**, is the project's main co-production initiative it has outlived the project and appears to be on the right track for sustainability.

The CitESS represents the **physical or virtual grouping**, within the same geographical area, of a set of complementary and synergistic local services/structures to which any SSE entrepreneur (with priority given to women and young people) can turn to in order to get support for the creation, development and sustainability of their enterprise. It can be assimilated to a **local platform, hub, a cluster, or a one-stop-shop for incubating and supporting SSE organizations**. It is set up as an association with partners from the public, private, and SSE sectors, and offers SSE actors, whatever their development stage, legal support, counselling, capacity building, networking, marketing services, eases access to information and to finance, etc.

The CitESS can consistently be considered a **model of social innovation**. It is in itself an SSE organization, borne by the SSE, and is based on strong collaboration with the local public sector. Moreover, it aims –through a series of co-produced supportive services, to improve the economic and social situation of the beneficiary social enterprises (whose aim is, all the more, to keep conceiving and providing innovative social services), and by doing so, has direct and indirect positive spillovers on the SSE community and on society as a whole, with job creation dynamized, and youth and women employment directly impacted.

The CitESS is, according to the implementing partners of iESS!, the main achievement of the iESS! project. The project was actually built around the concept of **setting up SSE clusters in underprivileged Tunisian regions**. According to iesMed, one of the leading consortium partners who implemented iESS!, the concept and model of CitESS is a promising one, worth replicating around the Mediterranean basin, with the ultimate ambitious objective of creating a network of CitESS across the Mediterranean, setting serious grounds for the development of the social and solidarity economy in the region, and hence contributing to levelling the developmental gaps that have been cumulated by the Middle Eastern and North African Mediterranean countries in terms of SSE concepts, initiatives, legal frameworks and integration within the national ecosystems. Basically, the iESS! project has established the CitESS as a sort of SSE label with potential for growth and intrinsic replicability.

7. Useful resources



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