

## MESMER+

### Mapping European Social Economy: Employment, Social Dialogue and the European Pillar of Social Rights

Project nr. 101052222

#### Policy lab – Italy

Date: September 14 2023

Time: 14:30- 17:30

Venue: Montepulciano – Luci sul Lavoro

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### Policy Brief & Event Summary

The policy lab in Italy was held in the frame of the event “[Luci sul Lavoro](#)” an Important and now historic event organised for 14 years in Montepulciano.

The event is dedicated to the world of work and is organised by Eidos (European Institute of Documentation and Social Studies) with the main National Federations of the Trade Unions supported by ETUC, ANPAL Servizi, the in-house company of the Ministry of Labour that operates in the field of active labour policies, enterprises associations and representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

The agenda of the policy lab was divided into two sessions:

During **session 1**: “Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue in Italy, the specificity of the Social Economy”, after a brief presentation of the project Mesmer+, its objectives and foreseen outputs, participants discussed the Italian model of social dialogue in general and the specificity of the social dialogue practices of the Social Economy; the discussion moved to the particularity of the Italian model where the Social Economy enterprises have separate industrial relation and social dialogue independent from one of the productive sector to which they belong. Then participants presented their experience and shared their practical experiences of social dialogue.

The following topics were discussed:

- The sectoral representation of the social economy sector. In Italy, there is a mechanism for sectoral representation in industrial relations, but the Social Economy has its specific representation. In Italy in fact, there are several representative organizations that focus on social economy and cooperative sectors. Prominent among them are "Confcooperative," "Legacoop" and "AGCI" which represents cooperatives in various industries, including agriculture, services, healthcare, manufacturing, housing, distribution, etc. These organizations actively participate in social dialogue on behalf of their member organizations to ensure that

the unique needs and interests of social economy organizations within specific sectors are taken into account.

These mechanisms may involve the following:

- The representation of different sectors or industries within the social economy sector. The social economy sector, sometimes called the third sector in Italy, includes a wide range of organizations and enterprises that are characterized by their social and community-oriented objectives. This sector encompasses a diverse range of organizations, including cooperatives, non-profit organizations, social enterprises, and mutual associations, which often operate in various sectors, following an overview of the representation of different sectors or industries within the social economy sector in Italy:
  - Agriculture and Agri-food: Italy has a strong tradition of agricultural cooperatives, which play a significant role in representing the agricultural sector in the social economy. Agricultural cooperatives are involved in the production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products, and they often operate in close collaboration with farmers and rural communities.
  - Consumer Cooperatives: Consumer cooperatives in Italy represent the retail and consumer goods sector. These cooperatives provide a wide range of products and services, including grocery stores, consumer credit, and various retail outlets. Coop Italia is one of the largest consumer cooperative organizations in the country.
  - Credit Unions: Credit unions, known as "banche di credito cooperativo," are a prominent part of the social economy in Italy, particularly in the financial services sector. These cooperatives serve the banking and financial needs of their members, including individuals and small businesses.
  - Housing and Real Estate: Housing cooperatives are active in the real estate sector, providing affordable housing solutions to their members. These cooperatives are involved in building, managing, and maintaining residential properties.
  - Healthcare and Social Services: They are Non-Profit organizations providing a wide range of services, including healthcare, elder care, disability services, and education.
  - Culture and Arts: Non-profit organizations and social cooperatives play an important role in promoting and preserving cultural heritage, organizing cultural events, and supporting the arts.
  - Environmental and Sustainability: Social enterprises and cooperatives focusing on environmental and sustainability initiatives are increasingly prominent in Italy. These organizations work on environmental conservation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture, among other areas.
  - Education and Training: Educational and training institutions in social economy often have a social mission and are involved in providing educational services, vocational training, and skills development.

- Tourism and Hospitality: In Italy, social economy organizations may run hotels, restaurants, and tourism-related services with a focus on sustainable and socially responsible practices.
- Local and Community Development: Various initiatives aimed at local and community development, including rural development and community revitalization, can be found within the social economy sector. These initiatives often involve cooperation among different local stakeholders.

These sectors within the social economy are not mutually exclusive, and many organizations may operate in multiple sectors simultaneously. The Italian government, along with sectoral organizations and cooperatives, actively supports and promotes the development of the social economy across these various sectors, recognizing its contribution to economic and social well-being in the country.

Independently from the general social dialogue of the industrial sector (i.e. agriculture, tourism, etc.) social economy organisations have their own specific social dialogue and collective bargaining. This means for example, that the general collective bargain for the agricultural sector, doesn't apply to the cooperatives working in agriculture, because they have their own collective bargain for the agricultural cooperative sector.

- Rules, norms and procedures related to the organisation of social dialogue, e.g., bipartite or tripartite structure of representative bodies, collective labour agreements, etc. Social dialogue in Italy is organized within a well-established legal and institutional framework, which includes rules, norms, and procedures governing the interactions and negotiations among key stakeholders (employers, employees, government representatives). Key rules, norms, and procedures related to the organization of social dialogue in Italy are:
  - Legal Framework: Social dialogue in Italy is regulated by a comprehensive legal framework, including the Constitution, labour laws, and specific regulations related to industrial relations. The Constitution of the Italian Republic (Article 39) recognizes the right to engage in collective labour agreements, emphasizing the importance of collective bargaining in labour relations.
  - Representative Organizations: Employers' organizations and trade unions play a central role in social dialogue. These organizations are recognized as the legitimate representatives of employers and employees and participate in collective bargaining and other forms of dialogue.
  - Sectoral and Company-Level Agreements: Collective bargaining takes place at both sectoral and company levels. National sectoral agreements set minimum standards and conditions that apply to all workers within a specific sector, while company-level agreements can further customize these terms.

- National Collective Bargaining Agreements: National collective bargaining agreements, known as "Contratti Collettivi Nazionali di Lavoro" (CCNL), are negotiated by the most representative employers' organizations and trade unions. These agreements set the standards for various aspects of employment, including wages, working hours, and labour rights.
- Consultation at Various Levels: Social dialogue occurs at multiple levels, including national, regional, and local levels. Local workplace-level agreements and negotiations are also an essential part of the process.
- Tripartite Forums: Italy has established tripartite forums at various levels, such as the national, regional, and local levels. These forums bring together representatives of employers, employees, and government officials to discuss and shape labour and social policies.
- Autonomy of Social Partners: The principle of social partners' autonomy is respected in Italy, allowing employer and employee representatives to negotiate and reach agreements independently, with minimal government interference.
- Procedures for Conflict Resolution: Italy has procedures for resolving labour disputes, including mechanisms for mediation and arbitration. The aim is to find amicable solutions to conflicts between labour and management.
- Inclusivity: Efforts are made to ensure that social dialogue includes diverse voices, and promotes gender equality and inclusivity.
- Information Sharing and Transparency: Social partners exchange information, ensuring transparency and data sharing during negotiations. This includes the sharing of financial and economic data relevant to the negotiation process.
- Social Responsibility: Many organizations and companies in Italy uphold a sense of social responsibility and engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. They contribute to the well-being of society by considering environmental and social aspects in their operations.
- Public Policy Influence: Social dialogue in Italy has a significant impact on public policies, including labour laws, social protection measures, and economic policies. Outcomes from social dialogue discussions may lead to legislative changes or government initiatives.

These rules, norms, and procedures collectively contribute to the organized and structured nature of social dialogue in Italy, promoting cooperation and consensus-building among stakeholders, and fostering an environment of labour peace and economic stability.

During the **session 2**: "Bilateral pension funds for supplementary pension scheme of workers in the Social Economy: an emerging tool for Social Dialogue" participants had an interesting discussion about this emerging phenomenon.

Bilateral pension funds are designed to provide additional retirement benefits to workers in the social economy sector, including employees of cooperatives, mutual associations, social enterprises, and non-

profit organizations. They serve to address the specific needs and interests of workers in this sector and contribute to social dialogue in different ways. They are often established through negotiations between employers and employee representatives. These negotiations can take place within the framework of social dialogue, where both parties discuss and agree on the structure, contributions, and administration of the supplementary pension scheme. They can be customized to meet the unique needs of workers in the social economy sector. Since the social economy encompasses various organizations with diverse employment conditions, these funds can be tailored to address specific concerns related to retirement benefits. Their establishment involves the representation of employers and employees. This inclusivity allows for a more comprehensive consideration of the interests and preferences of both sides, and their negotiation and creation require consensus-building between employers and employee representatives. This process fosters cooperation and collaboration, which are fundamental elements of effective social dialogue.

The emergence of the funds can also enhance the competitiveness of the Social Economy by:

- providing supplementary pension benefits, these funds can improve the attractiveness of employment in the social economy sector. Increasing the capability of recruiting and retaining qualified employees;
- encouraging long-term planning for retirement benefits, contributing to the financial stability and sustainability of the social economy organizations;
- Improving the well-being of workers and the overall success of the sector;
- Providing a high level of security and predictability for both employers and employees. The establishment of such funds is done in compliance with the legal framework for supplementary pensions in Italy, ensuring that they adhere to legal norms and procedures.

Many social economy organizations emphasize social responsibility in their operations. Among these, pension funds reflect a commitment to the welfare of their employees and align with the sector's values.

The creation and functioning of bilateral pension funds for the supplementary pension scheme may vary from one organization to another within the social economy sector. The specifics can depend on the agreements reached through social dialogue, the size and resources of the organization, and the sector's regulations. Furthermore, the role of social partners, such as cooperatives, trade unions, and employers' associations, is instrumental in driving the development and implementation of these funds. As an emerging tool in the context of social dialogue, bilateral pension funds for supplementary pension schemes demonstrate the adaptability and responsiveness of the social economy sector in Italy to the evolving needs of its workforce and contribute to the sector's overall sustainability and growth.

An example of Bilateral pension funds for supplementary pension scheme of workers in the Social Economy is “Previdenza Cooperativa” (Cooperative Social Security). It is the contractual pension fund

for workers, members and employees, of cooperative companies and of employees involved in hydraulic-forestry and hydraulic-agricultural installation work, made up of AGCI, Confcooperative, Legacoop and CGIL, CISL, UIL. It was born from the merger of the three complementary pension funds expression of the cooperative system (“Cooperlavoro” reserved to worker members and employees of cooperatives, “Previcoper” for workers of companies that apply the national cooperative distribution contract and “Filcoop” for employees employed in hydraulic-forestry and hydraulic-agricultural arrangement works for employees of cooperatives processing agricultural products). Previdenza Cooperativa is the fifth fund in Italy in terms of number of members (112,000) and the eighth in terms of assets (1.9 billion in assets). Its aim is to allow members to build a supplementary pension. It is non-profit and worker membership is voluntary. The amount of the final pension benefit depends on the contributions paid over the years and on the management returns.

## Annex – overview of organisations and functions of participants in the Italian Policy Lab

Organisation represented	Function of the participant
Trade Union	Territorial manager of the construction unions and member of the federation's council
Trade Union	Responsible of youth area
Trade Union	Delegate of disability and social services area
Trade Union	Operational auditor manager
Trade Union	Area responsible
Trade Union	Delegate of the information, entertainment and telecommunications trade union federation
Trade Union	General secretary of the Enterprise European Committee (multinational company)
Social Economy	President of a national federation of social cooperatives and social enterprises
Social Economy	Director of a network of social enterprises
Social Economy	Area responsible
Pension fund	General secretary of the association of funds
consultancy company in the sectors of complementary pension and supplementary healthcare	President and director
National agency for active labor policies. In-house company of the Ministry of Labour	Executives and managers