

SOLUTION 1

Mapping of the solidarity economy's potential in Trentino, Italy

Italy - FTC/PAT





1. TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

The Autonomous Province of Trento has adopted since 2010 - first in Italy - the provincial law 13/2010 that recognizes the role and promotes the development of the Solidarity Economy. 13 economic sectors have been identified (organic and biodynamic agricultural and agri-food products; fair trade; community welfare; short supply chain and food quality assurance; sustainable construction and green building; energy saving and renewable energy; ethical finance; sustainable mobility; reuse and recycling of materials and goods; local exchange systems; responsible and sustainable tourism; critical consumption and solidarity purchasing groups) in which the Solidarity Economy Actors (also called SEA) work, define the regulations to adhere to and comply for beneficiaries of the promotion and incentive actions.

The local action plan focuses on some territories of the Province of Trento that will be identified during the first phase of the action plan, taking into consideration the areas in which there are existing or, possibly, potential solidarity economy districts. The Autonomous Province of Trento seeks to address the various socioeconomic, demographic and cultural challenges especially in the most peripheral mountain valleys, in a phase of gradual depopulation, low birth rate and deprivation from even essential services. These challenges require a collaborative and inclusive approach between the various actors of the community to ensure shared development and sustainability over time of the solutions undertaken.

The districts of the solidarity economy (hereinafter DES) are an expression of a public-private partnership model. The DES were created with the aim of giving concrete application to the values of a mixed economic system, where the social and solidarity economy also has its own active role. Article 5 of the provincial law 13/2007 introduces this instrument into the provincial system, and provides that: **"the local authorities and the Province promote the creation of a district of the solidarity economy intended as an economic circuit, locally based, capable of valorizing territorial resources according to criteria of social equity and socio-economic and environmental sustainability, for the creation of financing, production, distribution and consumption chains of goods and services"**. This provision must be read in parallel with Article 43 of the same law which establishes that "for the purposes of integration between social and labor policies, the Province uses the tools provided by current legislation suitable for enhancing the working abilities of disadvantaged people in the care of social-welfare services, with the aim of creating the conditions for the creation of forms of solidarity economy based on protected work environments". This is therefore a particular model of a solidarity economy district, in which the "work" and "social inclusion" dimension plays a fundamental role.

The DES are then taken up again and described in a more precise manner in art. 7 of law 13/2010 (solidarity economy and corporate social responsibility) which establishes "The Province supports initiatives aimed [...] at the creation of the planned DES [...] as laboratories for civic, economic and social experimentation [...]"

More than 14 years after the DES instrument was foreseen, the need expressed by the Trentino solidarity economy is realized above all in having an evaluation/mapping of the DES existing/operating in the territory, of their strengths, weaknesses and prospects for their development. The challenge that we want to take up is to provide a governance model to the territories that is an element of sustainability and development, and that therefore also the DES, intended to strengthen the interaction between public, private and citizens in general, represent an element that can be concretely used and valorized, especially for its potential, in the contexts in which the interaction recalled can constitute a useful added value.

Furthermore, another need that is captured consists in the need for greater involvement and greater/representation/visibility of the role played by the protagonists of the solidarity economy in a promotional key. Therefore, the challenge is to create opportunities for greater interaction within the DES and between DES and to make the actors of the solidarity economy capable of "testifying" the quality of a model that can be positively transferred to different contexts, where it is important to increase citizen participation in the initiatives promoted also in the economic field.



The prospect is to “accredit” a Province of Trento characterized by territories and sectors of the economy also based on models of close collaboration and shared governance between public/private profit/private social/conscious citizenship. This is also thanks to co-management architectures and systems such as districts able to have an increasingly significant impact on the various economic areas and sectors, corresponding to the ESG (environmental social and governance) principles and facilitating an intense production of economic, social and environmental public value, creating a virtuous circle.

Finally, there is a perceived need to strengthen the network dimension and the collaboration between actors and territories already interested or potentially interested in the opportunities for intervention in the field of solidarity economy and DES.

In summary, the main problems (and related appropriate areas of intervention) identified during the context analysis are the following:

- Stronger and more rational connection between the different levels of government of the system (Solidarity Economy Board- Solidarity Economy Centre - DES) and between the DESs themselves;
- Strengthening coordination between actors within individual DESs;
- Improved capillarity of the presence of DES throughout the territory;
- Need to have more DES that pursue additional goals such as healthy eating, healthy living, sustainable tourism etc. and not only that which deals with the important issue of job placement for disadvantaged individuals;

Proposal solutions:

- Strengthen the governance of existing DES also through greater involvement of public bodies and the allocation of greater resources to coordination;
- Greater connection between DES and the solidarity economy centre, which can help in the collection and circulation of good practices, support for the development of existing DES, connection between existing DES and potential new DES, etc.
- possible activation of territorial and/or thematic sub-tables within the solidarity economy table, starting with the most active and sensitive areas, supporting the objective of having a territorial DES possibly for each homogeneous area.

2. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

The policy objectives of the Autonomous Province of Trento are aligned with the general objectives of the Joint International Strategy, in particular those outlined in Section 2.2, p. 9. These objectives are designed to promote sustainable development, social inclusion and economic resilience through targeted actions and collaborative efforts among various stakeholders.

In the immediate and short term, stakeholders believe it is necessary to strengthen above all the “bottom up” dynamics connected to the establishment and development of DES through awareness-raising, training, communication and marketing activities towards and from citizens and stakeholders.

In particular, it is considered necessary to immediately include in the action PLAN the actions characterising this desired dynamic:

1. activate a bottom-up approach that guarantees greater interaction between citizens, DES and public administration. In particular, we hope for the presence of much more widespread awareness-raising actions on the territory with meetings and initiatives also in the valleys and in the most marginal territories, the inclusion of the DES theme in existing training courses (e.g. training of territorial managers, university Masters, etc.), in awareness-raising and training courses to be continued and strengthened.
2. activation of a specific and recurring action of mapping and updating of the current system also aimed at the creation of new DES and new pilot projects in the territory.
3. Promotion of a complementary currency system.
4. Review of regulations and procedures as a first step towards full implementation and where necessary a reform of provincial law in a promotional and process-acceleration perspective.



5. Sharing of actions and objectives in a Solidarity Economy Board strengthened in the dimension of relationship with sectors and individual actors, broadening participation to new subjects and activating sub-boards (already foreseen by provincial law but not yet implemented) as a first step towards the formalization of a new territorial network.

With regard to medium and long-term objectives, the following actions have been identified:

1. Increased awareness and support for participation, including through training activities and the implementation of an ad hoc communication plan;
2. More resources to support DES, in particular (but not only) for coordination functions, but also on the basis of reward schemes;
3. Greater interaction and sharing of resources within the DES and between DES, also through the creation of a formalized network at territorial level (e.g. «Forum of the Solidarity Economy»). From this point of view, Trentino could become the territory from which an initiative starts that then expands to national and international level;
4. Greater presence of DES in the territory both in numerical terms and through the activation of new types of DES, and greater inclusiveness of the system both in terms of organizations involved and in terms of vulnerable sections of the population;
5. Innovation in the ways of relating between public and private sectors by overcoming tender procedures;
6. Review of the provincial law as a tool for framing and promoting the solidarity economy, in light of a detailed analysis of the impact and the strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

The main policy agenda proposals emerged from the general discussion and will then be broken down into 3 specific actions of the action plan, as specified in the following paragraph 3. The proposals on the new governance model of the DES are reported below.

Proposal	Expected result
Proposal, discussion and possible identification of a contact person who coordinates the various entities adhering to the network, organizing the coordination tables	The expected result is to start a discussion between the board, the center of the solidarity economy and the DES to define a referent who takes care of the coordination.
Improve collaboration between the different actors of the solidarity economy, including those of different legal forms, municipalities and businesses.	Involving the various community actors according to the quadruple helix model, i.e. associations, municipalities, businesses and research institutions. Stakeholder engagement is crucial and must be strengthened also by developing a roadmap for civic engagement and encouraging a participatory governance model.
Activation of sub-board (envisaged by provincial law)	4 sub-boards on specific topics have been foreseen: i) sustainable tourism; ii) sustainable mobility; iii) sustainable building and co-housing; iv) circular economy. Further strengthening of the existing sub-boards to foster continuous collaboration between stakeholders and creation of new ones in other sectors of interest.
Increase financial resources to ensure long-term sustainability	Under discussion by the provincial board of the solidarity economy are the following points emerged after the peer reviews: - identification of DES facilitators/referents with well-defined roles to support the



	<p>long-term governance and impact of DES initiatives;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allocation of initial financing for the start-up of DES; - definition of criteria for distributing the financing for the start up and promotion and strengthening of existing des activities; - contributions for activities of general interests for those actors who adhered to the SE guidelines.
Creation of a ‘solidarity economy forum’, a physical or virtual place where DES can meet	<p>The annual working plan 2025 envisages the creation of the forum as place of networking and discussion of perspectives, needs/requirements of DES but also of exchange of experiences. The creation of a forum pursues the very purpose of finding solutions to problems that have emerged or pose new challenges to be achieved in order to remain an active and attractive entity for the territory.</p> <p>It is important to define thematic areas for forum discussions and explore synergies with other existing regional and national forums.</p> <p>The organization of physical annual SSE forums might be a reference point for SE actors and guarantee long-term sustainability of the forum itself.</p> <p>The introduction of key performance indicators and impact evaluation assessments will improve the monitor progresses and improvement of LAP efficiency.</p>
Creation of an annual mapping of the EXISTING AND POTENTIAL DES	<p>Setting and definition of methodology and tools to enable for continuous mapping both of existing DES and main potential actors in pilot areas.</p> <p>To valorize monitoring process, data collection methodologies should be improved also in terms of better evaluation and decision making. To sustain this result a structured assessment mechanism for continuous feedback collection should be established.</p>

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN

Following the comparison arising from the workshops organised with the stakeholders of the Trentino Solidarity Economy and from the analysis of the context, the general shared objectives were identified which refer synthetically and operationally to the 3 areas of intervention:

1. MAPPING
2. FORUM OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY
3. INCREASING AWARENESS

These policy areas reflect shared general objectives and a general reading of needs. All 3 will be pursued, with different ways and times. Action 1, considered a priority and functional to the following ones, will be



a pilot intervention, detailed below, while actions 2 and 3 will be carried out by the Provincial Solidarity Economy board with provincial funds and therefore will not be subject to peer review.

In fact, actions 2 and 3, as required by provincial law 13/2010, have been submitted to the provincial board for the solidarity economy for their revision and approval. With reference to action 2, this has been validated and integrated in the Trentino SE plan 2025.

1.MAPPING

Component	Goals	Results
1- Analysis and research	Define an approach to the territory, a useful method to analyze and identify the strengths, prerequisites and feasibility (endogenous and exogenous) for the birth and animation of a DES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical tools (Activity 1.1) Operational tools (Activity 1.2)
2- Tool-kit	Development, presentation and discussion of toolkit for the establishment of new DES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit (Activity 2.1)
3-Introduction of tools and methodology for periodical updating	Set the path for continuous observation and mapping (complementary and future activity).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> annual mapping of the existing and potential DESs (Activity 3.1)

Component 1 - Analysis e research

Activity 1.1- Analysis and definition of a methodology

- Action 1.1.1 Define and engage a multidisciplinary team
- Action 1.1.2 Define an operational methodology

Activity 1.2 Research and involvement of the territories

- Action 1.2.1 Identify one or two pilot territories
- Action 1.2.2 Identify actors
- Action 1.2.3 Conduct interviews
- Action 1.2.4 Information campaign
- Action 1.2.5 Data collection
- Action 1.2.6 Sharing and discussion of the results emerged from the interviews with stakeholders and citizens

Component 2 - TOOL-KIT

Activity 2.1 Preparation and promotion of a Tool-kit (for PA and beyond)

Component 3 - Introduction of tools and methodology for periodical updating

Activity 3.1- annual mapping of the existing and potential DESs



- Action 3.1.1 Set and define methodology and tools for enabling the path for continuous mapping
- Action 3.1.2 Identify and define the subjects and entities to be included in the setting up of continuous mapping
- Action 3.1.3 identify and analyse what tools exist for mapping
- Action 3.1.4 Enhancing data collection

2 FORUM SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Component	Goals	Results
1- Analysis and research	Create greater connection between the various actors in the territory for the creation of a provincial forum with the function of monitoring, discussion and continuous development of the DES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network among institutions and local actors • More recognition of SE and external communication of the different roles within the Trentino SE (Board, Centre, DES, etc.) • Research and involvement of interested actors and identification of the forum's purposes and tools
2-Definition of activity program	Identifying topics of interest to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and scheduling of a forum activity program, mapping already existing events/fairs
3- General States of the DES	Preparation of an event that also involves the DES of other Italian regions to contaminate the different realities, learn about challenges, problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and implement the general states of the DES



3 INCREASING AWARENESS

Component	Goals	Results
1- Role of public administration	Raise awareness of local public administrations on the possibility and advantages to co-design with DES actors or DES so that they can provide goods or services without public procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Element to be valorized in the toolkit • Capacity building for public administrators
2- Definition of activity program and implementation of communication activities	Identify topics of interest to the community that can be the subject of training, laboratories, workshops during the year. It would also be useful to invest in communication. There is a website of the Trentino solidarity economy with a section dedicated to DES that has to keep updated highlighting main events of the DES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a survey or event to involve the population of the territories where DES are present and identify the topics of interest; • Development of sustainable communication plan for DES ensuring internal and external visibility and clearly communicate the value of DES to stakeholders and general public • Implementation of awareness raising activity program • Center's website implementation and annual planning also in terms of establishment of a financial monitoring tool to track public and finding opportunities and promotion/dissemination of the Toolkit for its piloting
3- Organization of awareness raising activities	Implementation of the activity program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organize and implement workshops, training courses, and courses on topics of interest to the population in the context of the solidarity economy • Modules on solidarity economy topics as part of courses organized by local institutions like Fondazione de Marchi (territorial manager courses) and Euricse "GIS master" • Promotion of the culture on cooperation with trainings for teachers • School trips to visit actors belonging to the Solidarity economy in Trentino to introduce young people to the topic



4. TERRITORIAL STAKEHOLDERS

Type of organization	Level of involvement	Strength (ability to influence the situation) high/medium/low
Trentino federation of the cooperative	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>
PAT	<u>High</u>	<u>High</u>
Consolida	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
Trentino Social Tank	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>
Members of the social solidarity districts of Trentino	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
Euricse	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>

5. SOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

Following the implementation of the actions outlined in the Action Plan – structured around the shared and jointly defined work paths deemed essential by the stakeholders of the Trentino Solidarity Economy System involved both in its design phase and in its implementation and evaluation stages – the Autonomous Province of Trento has identified a series of responses aimed at innovating its tools and intervention methodologies for promoting the local Solidarity Economy system, making it more effective, efficient, and functional in pursuing its intended objectives.

This process enhances the close synergy among the four components of its governance already defined in provincial regulations: public administration, accredited actors of the solidarity economy system (for the different standards), citizens and research institutes associated with both the design and implementation phases, contributing rigor and scientific value.

Among these, one solution stands out as particularly innovative and with long-term impact potential: **the permanent and participatory mapping of interaction and collaboration potentials.**

This proposed solution was immediately discussed during the development of the Action Plan within the **Provincial Table for the Solidarity Economy**, which brings together representatives of the various private, public, and social components, including citizenship, that assist and guide the decisions of the Provincial Government on the matter.

The solution was deemed essential to ensure that dialogue and interaction processes – which may lead to the creation, development, and consolidation of **Solidarity Economy Districts (Distretti dell’Economia Solidale)** – can become viable and sustainable over time.

Unanimously, this solution was formally proposed to the Provincial Government for **concrete activation starting with the 2026 annual plan**. A **first allocation of €10,000** has been designated for its implementation in 2026 within the budget allocated to the **Center for the Solidarity Economy**. This



allocation will be managed through the **Provincial Solidarity Economy Fund**, which provides annual funding to pursue the law's objectives, supporting various expenses as long as they are functional to the goal (personnel, goods and services, etc.).

The implementation phase of this solution will be continuously monitored by the Center, and the monitoring results will be submitted to the competent Provincial Table. This body will evaluate the outcomes, outputs, and impacts produced, in order to revise the framework and contents for subsequent years. This ensures that this device, like other innovative measures, is always subject to a **recursive cycle of design - experimentation - evaluation - revision**.

It is expected that the set of interventions composing this solution will be implemented continuously over time, becoming a stable part of the system's participatory governance in the coming years.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

The identified solution has been deemed necessary to promote a **complementary economic system** that is now ready to express itself as a mature system – more than fifteen years after the first support measures were introduced by the Autonomous Province of Trento.

While in the post-global financial crisis and sovereign debt crisis period, the activation of an alternative economy could be seen as an opportunity – as occurred in Trentino – to overcome the prevailing logics of the capitalist market by replacing competitiveness with solidarity between producers and consumers, today there is a recognized **need for functional dialogue and interaction** among governance tools led by public authorities (seeking the common good), economic operators (seeking the reproduction of ethical-productive values), and research institutions (ensuring scientific soundness and methodological accuracy).

This alignment of the legitimate interests of the “quadruple helix” (public-private-research-citizens) must lead to **sustainable, replicable, and economically viable results**, while ensuring that solidarity-based operators can access an alternative or complementary market guaranteeing fair remuneration for their productive factors – thus enabling survival even without continuous public support.

The goal of the proposed solution is therefore to **establish a “quadruple-helix” governance model** through the activation of a process and mechanism for **permanent and shared mapping of the potentials of the solidarity economy**, to be leveraged through **high-participation, co-managed mechanisms**.

This will be sustained through a **participatory governance process** designed to integrate the interests and strategic directions each category considers vital and aligned with its objectives.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOLUTION

The distinguishing features are:

- **Strong innovativeness**, both for the local socio-economic system and for broader regional and European contexts. This approach has never been tested in the Province and significantly transcends traditional public-private relationship models, introducing genuine **co-management dynamics**.
- **High scalability**, not only toward other local territories and sectors but also toward different contexts aiming to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of socio-economically oriented systems.



- **High effectiveness** in creating conditions that enable complementary economic systems to survive within public action constraints and market dynamics.

The solution is then considered transferable to other contexts, naturally taking into account the regulatory and institutional constraints specific to each domain.

The conditions required to enable at least the transfer of the essential elements of the solution are as follows:

- A public entity open to **participatory or deliberative democracy** models alongside traditional representative ones;
- The willingness of some enterprises to pursue **public-interest objectives**;
- The accompaniment of these processes with **research and studies** designed to identify ways to make segments of economic dialogue more efficient;
- The involvement of citizenship in defining innovative and participatory actions once the mapping data has been analysed and presented

These conditions are the basis for the activation of participatory governance processes, the support of corporate social responsibility, and they respond to bottom-up needs and processes. Essentially, the model implementing the solution translates into a "guided" and "participatory" approach to understanding and identifying needs and opportunities.

Furthermore, transferability is quite straightforward for the majority of local systems within the scope of Central Europe, as the shared desire, supported by European programs, including in the medium-term perspective (i.e., the 2028-2034 programming period), is to act in an innovative and streamlined manner in the governance mechanisms of social and solidarity economy systems. This is especially true given the alignment of these systems and their governance structures with the strategic objectives of the European Fund for Economic, Territorial, and Social Cohesion (EFSC) programming as per the European Commission proposal for a regulation COM(2025)565 dated 16 July 2025. Transferability will be supported by the Province of Trento supporting capacity building initiatives for the SE stakeholders promoter of the of social innovation development processes.

The Autonomous Province of Trento is committed to facilitating the transfer of this model by providing clarification and details on its assumptions, objectives, and content to any interested parties.

The owner of the identified and tested solution will be the Autonomous Province of Trento, which will continue to apply it in the planning and implementation of initiatives promoting the solidarity economy. Therefore, in 2026, the participatory mapping of territorial potential is expected to cover two additional areas deemed "sensitive" to the possibility of the establishment of districts (the Valsugana and Alto Garda areas). The actions will be implemented according to the process and methodology described. The impact of these processes will also be made available on the Trentino solidarity economy institutional website (<https://www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/>). The experimental development of the identified solution has already produced important results in the affected areas of the Province. The interventions of the Center for the Solidarity Economy will be tailored and organized in order to support the establishment of two districts.

In addition to the definition of a letter of intent with local stakeholders, the implementation of the identified solution will also be supported by the following services provided by the Center for the Solidarity Economy:

- consultancy support for the definition of "tailored" district agreements based on the results of the survey and analysis processes implemented using the solution described;
- consultancy for the definition of relevant business plans;



- implementation of dedicated training activities based on the identified potentials;
- support for the organizational structure.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLUTION

Based on the general overview above, the specific content of the identified solution can be described as follows: a **permanent and shared mapping of potential sectors and/or territories** to support the establishment, activation, and consolidation of solidarity economy districts.

The mapping process is **participatory**, in line with the quadruple-helix model, as the four categories of actors jointly contribute to:

- Identifying the sectors or territories to be analyzed;
- Defining tailor-made research tools to be adopted;
- Conducting surveys and field verifications;
- Assessing the results produced;
- Identifying the most appropriate operational frameworks based on the findings.

Although the process is collaborative, each actor contributes more directly to specific stages: research institutes ensure the methodological rigor of investigations; third-sector organizations enable in-depth business analyses through direct involvement; the public authority verifies the institutional feasibility conditions, citizens will be involved once the mapping data has been collected, evaluated and presented together with representatives of the Trentino solidarity economy to jointly define actions to support and promote the solidarity economy in light of the results of the mapping itself.

The model provides for the following **standard phases**:

1. Establishment of a **tripartite steering group** for the mapping;
2. Definition of a **pre-mapping methodology**, including preliminary data collection on socio-economic trends and market tendencies across representative areas or sectors;
3. Execution of the **pre-mapping phase**;
4. Identification, based on results, of **2-3 sectors or areas per year** for detailed mapping;
5. Activation of **local tripartite discussion and analysis tables** to assess the prerequisites for co-management of specific social and solidarity functions;
6. **Co-design** of potential co-management models for each sector or territory.

The entire process is accompanied and supported by a **specific toolkit (annex and available here <https://www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/progetto-3p4esse/>)**, already formalized and shared, enabling all actors involved in the mapping to operate according to a verified, effective, functional, and efficient framework – as validated through the Action Plan. The toolkit represents an innovative tool and solution to ensure the smooth functioning and sustainability of DESs over the long term.



In fact, methodologically, it was born from research conducted within the Trentino local action plan for the solidarity economy, analyzing the factors that can both enable and hinder the creation and smooth functioning of a DES.

The toolkit provides a detailed and precise governance model for a DES to ensure its long-term sustainability, along with the strengths and weaknesses to evaluate and consider throughout its lifespan.

It contains a checklist of the key factors required for the proper functioning of a DES, guidelines for the agreement to formalize a District for the Solidarity Economy, essential tools, and critical issues to avoid for both existing DESs and those being established.

It is the result of a quadruple helix co-management process, having been developed by a research center based on data collected in the first mapping of the LAP 1.0 districts. It was then evaluated and reviewed by the main public and private stakeholders in the Trentino solidarity economy, including the secretariat of the Trentino Provincial Solidarity Economy board, the ES Center, and the ES board, which approved it as a consultative body to the regional government, as well as with the support of the Territorial Cohesion Office of the PAT and the Trentino Federation of Cooperation.

It is also being tested in the newly established Valsugana DES in our province.