

SEA4NEB



Final paper on Social Economy Cluster Development
and the New European
Bauhaus: A Pathway to Resilient Communities

Diesis Network



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The aim of the final paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the peer review cycle's key components related to the cluster/main theme. It focuses on summarising the main characteristics of the best practices discussed, supported by evidence-based outcomes. Furthermore, it aims to capture the main points raised in the comment papers and peer review discussions. The paper also aims to analyse the lessons learned regarding the relevance, utility and transferability of good practice cases in a comparative European perspective. Lastly, the paper aims to explore the general implications for dissemination and stakeholder engagement strategies.

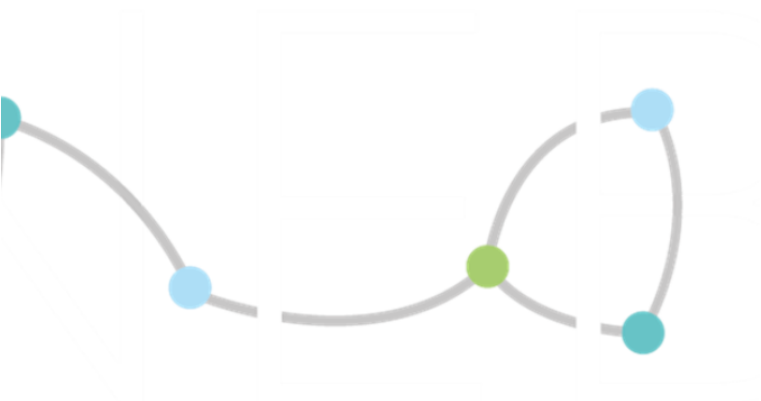
Thematic axis: Prioritising the places and people that need it most

Cluster: Cluster approach in the social economy ecosystem

Good practice cases: PLOUCS (France), Roccavaldina and Distretto Sociale Evoluto (Italy)

Draw on previous documents: Best practice case studies, background paper, comment papers from each country.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SEA4NEB project's third peer review cycle showcases how regeneration projects can be implemented successfully through a cluster approach. Focusing on the Social Economy Action Plan, it demonstrates how successful models such as Pôles Territoriaux de Coopération Économique (PTCE) and other examples of social economy clusters are aligned with the principles of the New European Bauhaus.

Case studies like Roccavaldina and PLOUCS highlight the transformative power of clusters. These examples emphasise inclusive collaboration among businesses, SMEs, chambers of commerce and incubators. This approach prioritises sustainable and inclusive business models rooted in local communities. The Roccavaldina initiative focuses on Parks of Beauty and Science (PBSes), using biomaterials and bioplastics from circular economies. The project includes rehabilitating a craftwork area, preserving architectural heritage, and zero-emission reforestation. Adopting the TSR¹ Process and a public-private partnership, the initiative secures funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and regional programmes. The PLOUCS initiative, recognised by the French government, engages in circular economy and sustainable agriculture projects, contributing significantly to the economic and social development of the Landes region. PLOUCS aligns strongly with New European Bauhaus values, integrating arts and circular economy practices, and fostering social inclusion through participatory, multilevel and transdisciplinary approaches.

The comment papers and the peer review explored stakeholder engagement, governance challenges, and financial sustainability in regeneration projects. Discussions emphasised the need for inclusive, sustainable, and accountable regeneration efforts involving diverse partnerships. Stakeholder engagement models like co-design and co-planning are essential, with an emphasis on shared governance and clear objectives.

The working groups emphasised the pivotal role of clusters in ensuring financial sustainability, championing innovative funding models, and diversifying funding sources. The peer review cycle delineates significant policy implications for effective regional regeneration through the cluster approach. These implications encompass measures that encourage and support cluster formation across sectors and stakeholders, develop policies that incentivise the creation of clusters aligned with New European Bauhaus principles, cooperate to diversify funding sources beyond initial public investments, mandate inclusive stakeholder engagement models, advocate clear governance structures balancing inclusivity and efficiency, recognise and support social economy initiatives, and integrate New European Bauhaus principles into regional development plans and funding criteria. These measures aim to foster holistic and collaborative regeneration, promoting transparency, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and the principles of the New European Bauhaus.

¹ <https://www.revesnetwork.eu/tsr/>

Creating an enabling environment for successful and sustainable regeneration projects based on the cluster approach requires collaborative actions among diverse stakeholders, including public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers. The policy implications identified serve as a guide for fostering transformative, inclusive, and aesthetically pleasing developments aligned with the New European Bauhaus vision.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PRACTICE APPROACH

The third peer review cycle of the SEA4NEB project has identified some excellent practices that use a cluster approach to implement projects based on regeneration. The case studies of PLOUCS, a Pôle Territorial de Coopération Économique (PTCE), and Distretto Sociale Evoluto (Advanced Social Cluster)² are notable examples of combining the power of clusters with Bauhaus ideals to encourage collaboration among specialised businesses, SMEs, incubators, and chambers of commerce. This approach aligns with the Social Economy Action Plan, which promotes sustainable and inclusive business models rooted in local communities. It refers to Clusters for Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI)³ which integrate social economy entities, local authorities, and education and research institutions to promote local prosperity. PTCEs exemplify this unique collaboration, demonstrating the socio-economic benefits of creating sustainable businesses.

The dynamic relationship between CSEIs, PTCEs, and the transformative capability of the New European Bauhaus emphasises the need to nurture these partnerships further. Two regeneration projects based on the social economy cluster approach aim to showcase how these models influence and redefine initiatives in alignment with the principles of the New European Bauhaus, prioritising the places and people that need it the most.

The **Roccavaldina** initiative, promoted by the Distretto Social Evoluto (DSE), aims to establish a Park of Beauty and Science (PBS) with a holistic and interconnected approach, focusing on new biomaterials and bioplastics from circular economies. The project has three key components: rehabilitating an abandoned craftwork area, enhancing the architectural heritage, and reforestation for zero emissions. The transformation of an abandoned handicraft centre into a hub for research, training, and production involves the creation of a research centre, a bioplastics factory, and a fab lab for innovation. The TSR® Process, a participatory methodology, is adopted for effective policy implementation. The synergy involves a public-private partnership, attracting talents, and aligning with New European Bauhaus principles.

² Distretto Sociale Evoluto is the term used to describe the Me.S.S.In.A. Foundation, which originated from the socio-economic clusters formed through the research and dedication of the Ecos-Med Cooperative between 1998 and 2010. Within this context, noteworthy entities include, but are not limited to, Ecos-Med S.C.S., the Sol.E. Consortium, and the Horcynus Orca Foundation, as longstanding members; the Birrificio Messina workers' buyout; and the new ventures, ESCo Solidarity and Energy S.p.A. Impresa Sociale.

³ A new approach to partnership and local green deals is one of the “**Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation**” (CSEIs), defined by the recent report *Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences*, published in December 2021 by the Expert Group on Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES). The report defines the concept of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEIs) as “*ecosystems which group mainly social economy entities with mainstream enterprises, civil society organisations, public authorities, and education and research institutions that cooperate in a particular location to improve local economic, ecological and societal prosperity and regeneration by facilitating cooperation, pooling of resources and enhancing innovation capacity*”. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1ceb9a1d-6146-11ec-9c6c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Funding sources include the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and regional programmes, fostering urban and social regeneration, economic revitalisation, and community development. The organisational model involves collaboration between the municipality, MeSSInA Foundation, Ecos-Med Social Cooperative, and Horcynus Orca Foundation, following a participatory democratic process for strategic planning. The initiative creates opportunities for economic development, inclusiveness, and environmental responsibility, emphasising the enlargement of the DSE and building cohesion through shared social norms and cooperation networks. The programme is designed through co-programming and co-planning, fostering a bottom-up approach and aligning with the principles of the New European Bauhaus for sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics. The organisational model involves the MeSSInA Foundation, Ecos-Med Social Cooperative, and the Horcynus Orca Foundation, governed by a board, trustees, and a scientific committee. The community is considered to be a stakeholder, with specific roles assigned to the municipality, MeSSInA Foundation, Ecos-Med Social Cooperative, and Horcynus Orca Foundation. The initiative aims to create co-working centres, educational-industrial centres, bio-plastic factories, and artistic/educational workshops to contribute to economic development, social cohesion, and cultural promotion in the Roccavaldina community.

Links with the New European Bauhaus Initiative:⁴

Roccavaldina and DSE exemplify the principles of the Beautiful Value, Sustainable Value, Together Value, Participatory Process, Multilevel Engagement, and Transdisciplinary Approach, aligning with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) compass. In the **Beautiful Value** domain (Ambition III to integrate), Roccavaldina focuses on an exosystemic approach, aesthetically enhancing local buildings through land art and promoting biodiversity preservation. The planting of over 2,000 trees in a former landfill not only contributes to carbon negativity but also extends collective care beyond the human community. Within the **Sustainable Value** ambit (Ambition III to regenerate), DSE's Polo Olivettiano serves as a circular economy hub, housing various stages of the process, including research and development, co-design with the local community, sustainable production, and distribution. The hub's role extends to being a centre for green job training and upskilling, emphasising lifelong learning opportunities for vulnerable groups. Under the **Together Value** domain (Ambition III to transform), DSE positions itself as a centre for social inclusion, providing need-based employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. This transformative approach integrates closely with the local municipality, acting as an intermediary in identifying beneficiaries and determining accessibility criteria. In the **Participatory Process** (Ambition II to co-develop), the engagement of local actors occurs at three levels: cluster members supporting identification and co-design, the local community participating in the regeneration process, and a mutual exchange partnership with the local municipality. The foundations are laid for the process to evolve towards Ambition III – self-

⁴ For more detail about New European Bauhaus Compass, please visit https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/NEB_Compass_V_4.pdf

governance, acknowledging it as being a gradual, long-term process. In **Multilevel Engagement** (Ambition III to work globally), DSE and its member entities participate in national and international networks, fostering the exchange of practices, expertise, and funding opportunities. The **Transdisciplinary Approach** (Ambition III to be beyond disciplinary) underscores the ambition to contribute to a new system based on a different economic model and an understanding of the human experience. It aligns with NEB's emphasis on the value and potential of beautiful spaces, enhancing community belonging, fostering knowledge exchange among various industries, and acting as a catalyst for sustainable, human-centred development. Roccavaldina and DSE's endeavours exemplify a holistic approach that resonates strongly with the NEB Compass, contributing to transformative, inclusive, and aesthetically pleasing developments.

PLOUCS is an established Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) organisation founded in 2017 in the Landes region of France. Recognised by the French government, PLOUCS holds accreditations from PTCE and Jeunesse Education Populaire. It comprises about 20 local SSE structures governed cooperatively and consisting entirely of legal entities. PLOUCS engages in various activities, including its SSE project incubator that provides project leaders with consulting, training, and co-working spaces funded by European and regional support. The organisation also develops educational tools, like the Kess'Essa game, which raises awareness of SSE and receives funding from the Landes department and regional sources. Moreover, PLOUCS drives the Coopératives Jeunesse de Services (CJS) initiative, allowing young people aged 16 to 20 to engage in cooperative projects during the summer. With an estimated budget of around €54,165 in 2023, the CJS programme is a vital part of PLOUCS's efforts to promote the SSE. PLOUCS supports local SSE initiatives by offering training courses and holding the Guide'Asso label, mainly funded by the government. Furthermore, it facilitates networking and cooperation between SSE actors, local authorities, and educational partners funded by the SSE region. With public and local authority support, PLOUCS has an overall annual budget of around €134,000. The organisation is essential to promoting the SSE, supporting social entrepreneurs, raising awareness, and creating opportunities for youth involvement in cooperative projects. In so doing, PLOUCS contributes significantly to the economic and social development of the Landes region. PLOUCS has been awarded the PTCE phase 1 label and aspires to phase 2. The organisation's goals include broadening its geographical scope, strengthening partnerships, developing new SSE projects, raising SSE awareness, and encouraging innovation to consolidate its position as a key regional SSE player.

Links with the New European Bauhaus Initiative:

PLOUCS demonstrates a strong alignment with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) values, showcasing its commitment to integrating arts and culture (Beautiful – Ambition III to integrate), closing the loop through circular economy practices (Sustainable – Ambition II closing the loop), and fostering social inclusion (Together – Ambition III to transform). As a social economy organisation, the working principle of PLOUCS represents the ambition of the New European Bauhaus, represented by a participatory process, multilevel engagement, and a

transdisciplinary approach. In detail, PLOUCS practices participatory co-development with participative governance structures (Participatory process – Ambition II), working globally (Multilevel engagement – Ambition III), and embracing a multidisciplinary approach (Transdisciplinary approach – Ambition III).

Specifically, PLOUCS promotes art dissemination through Landes'Art, engages in circular economy and sustainable agriculture projects, prioritises social inclusion in its initiatives, and actively participates in national and international collaborations, including knowledge exchange with European clusters. The organisation's emphasis on a quadruple-helix model involving public administration, academia, civil society and the private sector reflects its dedication to shaping shared spaces and communities. PLOUCS's efforts exemplify the principles of the NEB Compass, making it a noteworthy contributor to the vision of a more sustainable, inclusive, and aesthetically pleasing future.

MAIN POINTS RAISED IN THE COMMENT PAPERS AND PEER REVIEW DISCUSSIONS

The comment papers and peer review discussions within the working groups have provided valuable insights into critical aspects of stakeholder engagement, governance challenges, and financial sustainability inherent in regional regeneration projects, with a specific focus on diverse cluster models. The discussions shed light on the intricacies involved in achieving effective stakeholder engagement and navigating governance challenges within regional clusters, exemplified by PLOUCS and Distretto Sociale Evoluto (DSE). These insights underscore the significance of addressing long-term financial sustainability, emphasising the need to transition away from dependency on grants. The discussions highlight the pivotal role of public funding as a catalyst for initiating regeneration efforts within the unique context of specific cluster models. The overarching objective is to foster the development of self-sustainable projects capable of generating financial resources, ensuring the enduring viability of regional regeneration initiatives within the cluster framework.

The working groups undertook a comprehensive exploration of multifaceted strategies to achieve **financial sustainability** in regeneration projects. The group recognised the indispensability of diversifying funding sources beyond initial public investments. The discussions underscored the importance of shifting from sole reliance on traditional funding models to innovative approaches, particularly embracing a cluster-based strategy for sustainable development. The group emphasised that while money plays a crucial role in social entrepreneurship (SE), it should not be the sole focus. Rather, a profound understanding of the value flow within communities and fostering relationships-based organisations have emerged as pivotal components. The group navigated through a series of probing questions, urging participants to critically evaluate the necessity of money and to explore alternatives, such as growing food and providing shelter as communal efforts. The insights highlighted that SE transcends monetary transactions, emphasising the importance of values and reinforcing the identity of all members through a charter of common values. In a groundbreaking shift, the group explored the concept of virtual currencies not only as a medium of financial exchange but also as a tool for fostering a collaborative economic system. This innovative approach considered the exchange of experiences and expertise within clusters, envisaging a system where shared knowledge holds intrinsic value, acting as a first step towards building a robust economic foundation. The group enriched the discussions with practical experiences from different countries. Italy's rich cooperative tradition has been deemed beneficial, yet challenges have arisen, especially in overcoming historical prejudices in Croatia and Latvia. The need for strong commitment and cooperative clusters, featuring internal financial mechanisms like microcredits and venture capital funds, was emphasised as a crucial aspect of successful SE initiatives. The example of Fondazione MeSSInA, born as a community foundation and governed by the members of the cluster to provide support to the cluster itself,

was quoted as a good model to answer complex and diversified territorial needs. The group also delved into funding mechanisms, underlining the importance of co-financing and strategies for creating resources for reinvestment. The examples shared ranged from innovative local currency systems in France and Italy to collaborations with universities, companies and foundations. This highlighted the dynamism required in seeking funding from diverse sources, including private investors, public institutions, and ethical banks.

In terms of long-term **sustainability**, the working groups advocated a blend of funding and service-oriented models, citing examples like immersive room projects and training processes offered to associations. The challenge of trust and ethical considerations in financial partnerships was discussed, with an emphasis on aligning values between funding sources and organisations. Lastly, the insights from the working groups underscored the critical role of clusters in ensuring financial sustainability. From fostering cooperation among different organisations to transferring management responsibilities to private entities, clusters have emerged as strategic frameworks that bridge the gap between public and private sectors, unlocking pathways to sustained success beyond the initial funding period. The group acknowledged the risk of local businesses still requiring money within clusters, and proposed an intriguing solution: experimenting with local currencies recognised among cluster members, encompassing not only financial transactions but also the exchange of experiences and expertise. This innovative model aimed to establish a comprehensive economic system, promoting sustainability from the project's inception and mapping entities with shared values to identify potential co-financers.

In the framework of **stakeholder engagement**, the working groups emphasised the need for inclusive, sustainable, and accountable regeneration efforts that involve diverse partnerships comprising public authorities, the private sector, the community, the social economy ecosystem, and academia. Collaborative models were identified as crucial to prioritising regeneration initiatives and preventing them from being overshadowed by other projects, thereby substantially contributing to local economic development. The discussions held during the group meeting underscored the paramount importance of involving the community in the planning and implementation of regeneration projects. This inclusiveness is essential to ensuring alignment with community priorities and fostering local development. The group also discussed various models and tools employed for effective stakeholder engagement, such as co-design and co-planning, to initiate the regenerative process and foster active involvement from the community.

The group highlighted the importance of shared governance and a clear understanding of objectives, challenges, and available resources for genuine collaboration. Insights into the network of commercialisation and cooperation showcased the importance of sharing values within the project, particularly focusing on economic and environmental sustainability. The creation of a shared identity around specific aspects, such as food, was highlighted as an effective way to bring people and organisations together.

The concept of stakeholder engagement at the level of citizens was also explored, with ethical considerations to ensure shared values within the cluster composition. The discussions also explored strategies to attract and engage stakeholders, emphasising the importance of relationship-building over time, drawing parallels with elements from various realms like religion, church, football and money. This perspective emphasises the need for clear rituals and tangible value propositions to effectively engage stakeholders in regenerative projects within the cluster framework.

Effective management and governance are crucial for regeneration projects with a cluster approach. These projects involve interconnected social, ecological and economic systems, and a holistic perspective is necessary for success. This perspective includes transparent communication, robust feedback mechanisms, and conflict resolution strategies. The working groups discussed the intricacies of creating governance structures that are both inclusive and efficient. They highlighted key considerations, such as a clear vision, legitimacy, and a balance of skills and knowledge. They also explored the size of the governing body, suggesting that smaller groups facilitate faster decision-making and build personal trust. Practical experiences from different clusters showed that structures like statutes can define the nature of the organisation. The engagement of private entities was acknowledged, and economic incentives were recognised as contributing to long-term motivation. Decision-making boards, executive persons, and a multisectoral approach involving various domains were identified as essential components of successful management and governance.

The working groups emphasised the importance of collaboration and shared interests rather than purely economic incentives. They also discussed the challenge of maintaining engagement over time and underscored the value of compensating board members for their time and effort in fostering sustained engagement. In Messina, a coordination group was established to handle the complexity of the cluster. In Croatia, a new governance model was experimented with, involving a balance of members from institutions, cultural organisations, and the platform to enhance independence in decision-making processes.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The third cycle of peer reviews for the SEA4NEB initiative has identified a range of policy implications that are crucial for effective regional regeneration using the cluster approach. These implications have been inferred from successful cases in France and Italy, as well as comment papers and peer review discussions. The following are the key implications and their subtitles:

Adoption of cluster-based approaches for regeneration:

The success of clusters like Roccavaldina and PLOUCS highlights the effectiveness of cluster-based strategies in regional regeneration. Public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers should collaborate to encourage and support cluster formation. This entails promoting cooperation among social economy entities, educational institutions, and local authorities. Develop policies that incentivise the creation of clusters aligned with the New European Bauhaus principles.

Long-term financial sustainability:

Sustainability in regeneration projects is crucial for long-term success, and over-reliance on grants needs to be transitioned away from. Public authorities, third-sector organisations, and academia should cooperate to assist in diversifying funding sources beyond initial public investments. Encourage innovative funding models, such as virtual currencies within clusters, and facilitate collaborations with private investors, ethical banks, universities and foundations.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement:

Inclusive stakeholder engagement, particularly involving the community, is paramount for successful regeneration projects. Stakeholders from public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers should collectively mandate and facilitate inclusive stakeholder engagement models, such as co-design and co-planning. Ensure diverse partnerships involving communities, social economy ecosystems, and academia. Provide clear guidelines for the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes.

Transparent communication and governance:

Transparent communication, robust feedback mechanisms, and conflict resolution strategies are crucial for successful management and governance in cluster-based regeneration projects. Public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers should work together to advocate clear governance structures that balance inclusiveness and efficiency. Encourage the formation of decision-making boards with a multisectoral approach, involving various domains. Support initiatives that experiment with governance models for improved adaptability.

Promotion of social economy and SSE initiatives:

Organisations such as PLOUCS play a vital role in promoting social and solidarity economy, contributing significantly to the economic and social development of regions. Stakeholders from public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers should collectively recognise and support social economy initiatives. This entails providing funding, accreditation, and promotional avenues. Encourage the replication of successful models like PLOUCS in other regions, fostering social entrepreneurship and youth involvement in cooperative projects.

Alignment with New European Bauhaus principles:

The principles of the New European Bauhaus, emphasising sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics, align well with successful regeneration projects. Public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers should collectively integrate the New European Bauhaus principles into regional development plans and funding criteria. Prioritise projects that adhere to these principles, promoting a holistic and collaborative approach to regeneration.

In conclusion, the policy implications drawn from the SEA4NEB project underscore the importance of collaborative actions among diverse stakeholders, including public authorities, third-sector organisations, academia, and policy-makers, to create an enabling environment for successful and sustainable regeneration projects based on the cluster approach.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- <https://sea4neb.eu/>
- <https://ploucs.fr/>
- <https://fdcmessina.org/>
- https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en
- https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/get-involved/use-compass_en

PROJECT PARTNERS

The SEA4NEB project consortium is composed by:

