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Case Study

PLOUCS

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<https://sea4neb.eu>

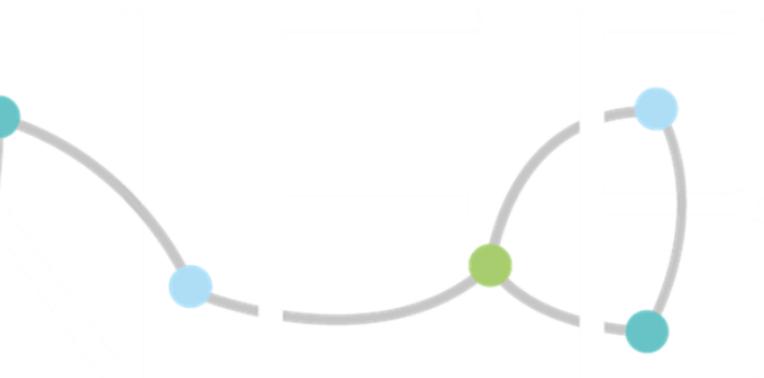
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Case study of good practice:

Pole Territoriale de Coopération Economique (PTCE) PLOUCS: Projets Locaux Ouverts Utiles Collectifs et Solidaires

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

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CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF HOW THE GOOD PRACTICE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED

PLOUCS, the association for the development of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in the Landes, was born out of the initiative of a group of players committed to promoting the SSE in this area of south-west France. The association was created in 2017 to meet an identified need in the region: to strengthen the SSE and its principles of solidarity, social entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The Landes *département*, while offering great economic and natural diversity, was facing socio-economic challenges, notably unemployment and precariousness in some rural areas. Therefore, the founders of PLOUCS decided to set up a structure dedicated to the promotion and development of the SSE.

The Landes department is located in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, in the south-west of France. The Landes is characterised by a mixture of coastal areas, pine forests, farmland and small towns. The department is renowned for its natural beauty, but it also faces challenges in terms of environmental preservation and economic development. The Landes has a diverse population, with a mix of young people, active workers and retirees. Urban centres such as Mont-de-Marsan and Dax coexist with more rural areas. The average age of the population varies according to geographical area, with a trend towards ageing rural demographics in some parts of the department. The Landes has a diversified economy, including agriculture (particularly maize and duck production), the timber and paper industries, coastal tourism and a growing social economy sector. However, despite this diversification, some areas of the Landes are experiencing economic challenges, particularly in terms of unemployment and job insecurity. The Landes is home to many social and solidarity initiatives, including associations such as PLOUCS, which are working to strengthen the social and solidarity economy in the region. Solidarity and preservation of the environment are important values in this context, and the people of the Landes are often involved in projects aimed at improving the quality of life and sustainability of the region.

The SSE has emerged as an alternative to the traditional economy, emphasising principles of solidarity, cooperation and social responsibility. Numerous SSE initiatives have developed, ranging from cooperatives to associations and social enterprises. The French government has been active in supporting and promoting the SSE through a range of public policies and initiatives, including the PTCEs (Pôles Territoriaux de Coopération Économique). PTCEs were officially created in 2014 by the law on the social and solidarity economy. This law aimed to encourage cooperation between SSE players and strengthen their role in territorial development. PTCEs are groupings of SSE players, such as associations, cooperatives, social enterprises, local authorities, universities, and other partners, working together to develop economic, social and environmental projects in a given territory.

PTCEs aim to create synergies, strengthen cooperation and encourage social innovation. The mission of the PTCEs is to create sustainable jobs, encourage social entrepreneurship, address job insecurity and contribute to local development. They are also designed to be spaces for experimentation and innovation, exploring new forms of governance and economic models. Funding for the PTCEs is provided during phase 2, in response to a call for expressions of interest. Olivia Grégoire, Secretary of State for the Social, Solidarity-based and Responsible Economy (2020-2022), has been behind the relaunch of the dynamic since 2021. Marlène Schiappa, the new Secretary of State for the Social and Solidarity Economy and Associative Life, confirmed the continuity of action on the development of PTCEs when she presented her roadmap on 14 September 2022. Her stated ambition is a minimum of one PTCE in each *pays* ("country") of France, i.e. 300 PTCEs by 2024. To achieve this, a budget of €2.5 million has been pledged.

To sum up, the PTCEs have emerged in France in response to a need to strengthen the SSE and promote more solidarity-based and sustainable economic models. They are part of a context of public policies aimed to support the SSE and encourage cooperation between local players to meet contemporary economic and social challenges. PLOUCS's recognition as a PTCE in 2023 testifies to its commitment to these objectives.

PTCEs address a number of issues and challenges in the course of their work and are part of a broader spectrum of activities related to the social and solidarity economy (SSE). The following is a discussion of these issues and challenges, and their place within a broader conceptual/thematic framework.

Problems and challenges addressed by the PTCE:

1. **Unemployment and precariousness:** PTCEs often work in areas where unemployment and economic precariousness are a concern. By promoting the creation of sustainable jobs within the SSE, they help to tackle these problems;
2. **Depopulation of rural areas:** In many rural areas, depopulation and demographic ageing are major challenges. By encouraging social entrepreneurship and local economic development, PTCEs aim to revitalise these areas;
3. **Social innovation:** PTCEs are laboratories for social innovation. They experiment with new forms of governance, cooperation and economic models, which can be complex but stimulating;
4. **Sustainable development:** PTCEs are often involved in projects with a positive impact on the environment, such as the promotion of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy or soft mobility.

Ultimately, PTCEs like PLOUCS are key players in social and economic transformation. They address concrete problems and challenges while embodying the principles and values of the SSE, thereby helping to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

SUMMARY OF MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PRACTICE APPROACH

PLOUCS was created in 2017 in Landes, France, by a group of players committed to the social and solidarity economy (SSE). PLOUCS has PTCE accreditation and Jeunesse Education Populaire accreditation, both of which are issued by the French government.

French law distinguishes between natural persons and legal entities (structures such as associations and cooperatives). PLOUCS is made up solely of legal entities, i.e. local SSE structures, as regards both its founders and its members. Today, PLOUCS brings together around 20 legal entities from across the region. Its governance reflects its cooperative objectives, and it operates on a collective basis.

The Board of Directors is made up of five organisations (La Smalah, C Koi Ça, Co-Action, Artelandes and La Cowo) which operate on a collective basis. The board meets every month to review current, past and future initiatives. The agenda is prepared by the coordinator, and decisions are made by mutual consent or, in the event of disagreement, by vote.

Every year, PLOUCS organises meetings and debates with its members (four half-days a year) called "Les Tous Pour Un PLOUCS". During these discussions, PLOUCS raises questions and issues relating to the overall operation of the association, which help to guide its actions. A general meeting is held once a year at which PLOUCS:

1. presents a financial and moral report on its activities over the past year
2. suggests guidelines and projects to be voted on for the coming year
3. organises workshops to reflect on and work on improving the way the association operates

Finally, in 2021, the association organised a major event, "Les assises du Ploucs", which led to the setting up of working groups of members: a youth group, an agricultural group and a group working on cooperation between members.

These groups come together according to the projects and needs of the association in order to work together on the organisation's priorities.

From the outset, PLOUCS has focused on several different areas of work. Here is an overview of its main activities and project funding:

1. **SSE project incubator:** This activity consists of supporting and guiding SSE project leaders by offering them a range of services, including management consultancy, training, one-to-one coaching and possibly co-working spaces. The aim is to help these structures develop their ideas and organise themselves to become viable SSE structures. The incubator project is financed by European funds (ESF), the New

Aquitaine region (also via European funds), the Landes department, part from the state and a small part from its own funds. Overall, the budget forecast for the incubator in 2023 is €40,500.

2. **Education and awareness of the SSE:** PLOUCS carries out educational activities and activities to raise awareness of the SSE. These include the creation of educational tools such as the Kess'Essa game, designed to help young people and other audiences better understand the principles and values of the SSE in a fun and interactive way. Together with all its members, PLOUCS has set up a youth group with the aim of creating a learning approach to understanding and educating young people about the SSE. Most of the funding for this activity comes from the Landes department, the region and the income generated by running the Kess'Essa game. PLOUCS has an estimated budget of €7,500 for this area.
3. **Jeunesse de Services (CJS):** The association organises Coopératives Jeunesse de Services. These enable young people aged 16 to 20 to take part in cooperative projects during the summer. These young people have the opportunity to acquire entrepreneurial skills while contributing to service activities in their community. The projected budget for this initiative is around €54,165 for 2023. This budget includes the setting up of two CJSs in the department, one in the Pays Morcenais and the other in the Coeur Haute Landes Community of Communes.
4. **Support for local SSE initiatives:** PLOUCS supports and encourages the development of local SSE initiatives. This may include the promotion of cooperatives, associations, social enterprises and other forms of social entrepreneurship in the Landes. PLOUCS offers training courses to strengthen and support its members. It also has the Guide'Asso label (a national certification), which enables it to direct SSE structures to the right people. Almost all of the funding for this area comes from the government. It is injected into the operations and cooperation axis through staff costs (in coordination) and costs linked to training providers.
5. **Networking and cooperation:** The association promotes networking and cooperation between SSE actors, local authorities, educational partners and other organisations with similar objectives, through meetings, exchanges of practice and transfer of know-how. Most of the funding for this strand comes from the SSE region.

PLOUCS operates with the support of public institutions and local authorities and has an overall budget of around €134,000 a year.

In short, PLOUCS plays an essential role in promoting the SSE, supporting social entrepreneurs, raising public awareness of SSE values, and creating opportunities for young people to get involved in cooperative projects. Its activities contribute to the economic and social development of the Landes region by promoting the values of solidarity, equity and sustainability. Through its form of collective governance, and its method of financing, which is largely publicly funded, it plays a role of public utility in the Landes region.

PLOUCS has been awarded the PTCE phase 1 label, which is often dedicated to the creation and initial development of a PTCE. This includes mobilising stakeholders, defining objectives and setting up pilot projects. A package of services is offered to phase 1 PTCEs, including learning visits and training on their development. This package of services is delivered by the CRESS (Chambre Régionale de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire).

Phase 2 of a PTCE, often called the "acceleration phase", is carried out in response to an "AMI" (call for expressions of interest) and in France in 2023, only 15 PTCEs will be selected. This second phase generally takes place after a PTCE has established its foundations and demonstrated its effectiveness in promoting the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in its area. During this phase, the PTCE may be eligible for funding of up to €100,000 to strengthen and develop its activities. (See paragraph on government funding). The aim of phase 2 is to enable the PTCE to scale up, broaden its impact and consolidate its position as a key player in the SSE in its region.

Phase 2 activities may vary depending on the specific needs and objectives of the PTCE, but generally include initiatives to:

1. broaden the geographical scope of the action of the PTCE by bringing in more territories or partners
2. strengthen partnerships with other SSE players, local authorities, businesses, etc.
3. develop new SSE projects with a strong economic, social and environmental impact
4. raise the profile of SSE and make a wider public aware of its principles and values
5. encourage social and economic innovation

The fact that it has earned PTCE status means that PLOUCS is recognised by the public institutions that fund it and for its impact on the local area.

EVIDENCE/JUSTIFICATION FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Since 2017, PLOUCS has seen a clear improvement in skills in the region. Today, it is enjoying numerous successes in its three key areas. PLOUCS will support 12 projects in 2023, compared with 10 in 2022, with the aim of supporting 2-4 more in 2024, as the number of organisations applying to PLOUCS increases each year. One of the reasons for the increase in applications is the fact that PLOUCS is increasingly well recognised by both local authorities and citizens. PLOUCS also continues to enhance its communication through social networks and the internet.

Most of the projects that PLOUCS has supported are based on the circular economy. Among the different projects that PLOUCS has supported are:

- La Brocante Eco-Solidaire in Mimbaste, which offers recycled furniture and household appliances on its premises, as well as a recycling centre and a community café;
- La Maison Eco-citoyenne des Landes in Mont de Marsan, which aims to raise awareness of ecology and sustainable development;
- Imagine in Linxe is an association whose aim is to create a shared garden and activities in a community café;
- Landes'Art, an association that aims to promote art from the Landes region in two ways: an art library that travels around the region visiting media libraries, and a gallery that rents works by artists from the Landes region;
- Roue Libre en Grand Dax, an association that raises awareness of soft mobility (cycling) and helps the local authority to identify and diagnose the need for cycle paths in the conurbation;
- Bike repair and recycling projects;
- PLOUCS has supported a number of projects aimed at using unused buildings in rural communities;
- PLOUCS has supported a project for a community café and social space in the former post office of Herm. This type of project requires buildings to be brought up to standard and refurbished, which can take a long time to complete.

Lastly, the members of PLOUCS are organisations involved in activities relating to the circular economy and experimentation with new practices:

- The Jeanot eco-environment, run by the C Koi Ça association (founding member), is one of a number of initiatives that are experimenting with and raising awareness of

new permaculture market gardening practices, as well as improving understanding of the issues involved in short-distance food supply;

- Smalah (a founding member) is working on a number of initiatives in its area relating to the circular economy. It has set up a shed to rent out shared tools for repairs and building;
- The RCCNA (a member of PLOUCS) is a regional network that aims to educate and train people in composting;
- Co-Action (a founding member), a cooperative of salaried entrepreneurs, envisages a social, human and economic alternative to traditional business models.

The Network Effect, an event which takes place every year, widens the field of possibilities and enables PLOUCS to be identified by local players who trust it and call on it for specific support.

In the area of youth, the CJS and the Kess'Essa game have proved their worth. As a result, local authorities are asking PLOUCS to introduce youth centres into their areas in order to strengthen their youth policy. In 2023, PLOUCS set up two youth centres in the region, one in the Pays Morcenais community and another in Coeur Haute Lande.

Thanks to a close partnership with the CRESS and the ESPER, PLOUCS is distributing its Kess'Essa game within schools, through Mon ESS à l'Ecole, a scheme enabling the creation and inclusion of a SSE structure within schools.

The number of PLOUCS member structures increases every year, and PLOUCS continues to be as close as possible to the needs of its members.

In order to monitor projects, PLOUCS organises a meeting in October with all the project leaders incubated since its creation. This meeting provides a wealth of information on the future of the projects and their needs.

Partnerships and cooperation with local authorities are still a work in progress, but PLOUCS has considerably strengthened its links with the Pôle d'équilibre territorial et rural (PETR) and wishes to continue this cooperation throughout the region.

OUTCOMES FOR THE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Today PLOUCS has 18 member organisations, some of which are members of the board of directors. The new structures are introduced and involved in different areas, youth, agriculture, support, training, etc.

Although PLOUCS seemed unclear to many at the outset, it has now become a recognised structure at the head of the SSE network in the Landes department. It is invited to numerous events and consultations.

For example, PLOUCS takes part in the CLEE (Local School Enterprise Committee) in Parentis, which enables it to represent the department's SSE structures. It has been asked by the department to act as a consultant in writing the department's SSE specifications. It promotes the exchange of practices in New Aquitaine and participates in peer-to-peer sponsorship by organising learning visits.

Thanks to its closer links with the PETR Haute Landes, it is able to benefit from a TSF (Transfer of Know-how) on initiative factories. It works with the CRESS and ADI (Development and Innovation Agency) to guide and raise awareness of social innovation, by linking up the various players.

PLOUCS is nationally recognised and accredited as a Jeunesse Education Populaire (Youth and Popular Education) and a Guid'Asso (Association Guide) organisation and is positioned as a benchmark for youth and popular education.

PLOUCS is a member of various groups of players such as ACA 40 (chain of support structures in the Landes) and the grouping of incubators in New Aquitaine.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths of PLOUCS are:

1. **Commitment to the SSE:** It demonstrates a strong commitment to the social and solidarity economy (SSE), which is a strength in itself, since the association was set up to promote and support the SSE in the region;
2. **SSE project incubator:** This is a major strength. It offers valuable support to social entrepreneurs, helping them to develop their SSE ideas and businesses;
3. **Education and awareness:** It invests in SSE education and awareness, which is essential to increase the understanding of the SSE in the community and encourage the creation of social projects;
4. **PTCE accreditation:** It has been accredited as an emerging PTCE in recognition of its contribution to the development of the SSE in the region and its importance as a key player;
5. **Partnerships:** Collaboration with other SSE organisations, local authorities and educational institutions strengthens the scope and impact of its activities;
6. **Educational innovation:** The creation of the Kess'Essa game demonstrates an innovative approach to raising young people's awareness of SSE, making learning fun and interactive;
7. **Youth support:** Its activities to support young people, whether through **Youth Service Cooperatives (YSCs)** or SSE education, strengthen young people's capacity to engage in social projects. Youth Services Cooperatives (YSCs) are an excellent way of involving young people in cooperative projects and giving them practical experience in social entrepreneurship;
8. **Network:** The association is part of a wider network of SSE actors, which can provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources.

These strengths help to make PLOUCS an influential player in promoting the SSE, supporting social entrepreneurs, and educating people in the region about the SSE. They are essential to achieving the goals of the association in terms of sustainable economic development and social inclusion.

However, like any association, PLOUCS also faces difficulties:

1. **Insufficient funding:** Funding is often a major challenge for SSE organisations. It can be difficult to secure stable long-term funding to support activities and projects. PLOUCS is still experiencing cash-flow difficulties and completing a grant application sometimes takes longer than the project itself;

2. **Human resources:** PLOUCS currently has a single employee, which sometimes compromises the structure (sick leave, work overload, organisational issues etc.). However, hiring a second person implies an increase in funding, which remains difficult for the time being;
3. **Visibility and awareness-raising:** Although PLOUCS may have awareness-raising initiatives, it can be difficult to raise awareness of the SSE among a wide audience and to generate significant commitment;
4. **Policy change:** Changes in government policies or public funding may have an impact on the activities of SSE organisations;
5. **Evolving community needs:** Community needs may evolve over time. PLOUCS needs to be agile to respond to new priorities;
6. **Innovation and adaptation:** The SSE sector is constantly evolving, and PLOUCS must remain innovative and adaptive to remain relevant;
7. **Partnerships:** Maintaining strategic partnerships and cooperating with other SSE actors can be complex but is essential for long-term success.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER EXPERIENCES (ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY – IN SAME TERRITORY OR ELSEWHERE)

The PTCE Sud Aquitaine (Tarnos PTCE) is located in the south of the Landes department and its scope extends to the Pyrénées Atlantiques and Béarn regions. It is a partnership bringing together players in the social economy in the southern Aquitaine region. Its aim is to strengthen cooperation and promote a local economy and development that encourage ecological, social and economic change.

The signatory members undertake to share information and resources, and to participate actively in collective projects, including those that go beyond their own areas of activity. The Tarnos PTCE fosters solidarity and interdependence between member structures and promotes a shared vision of development. Governance is based on principles of consent, and a cooperation committee oversees projects. The PTCE works in collaboration with the Seignanx CBE to lead the collective and implement its political project for territorial development.

1. **Incubator and business incubator:** The PTCE Sud Aquitaine is committed to supporting the creation and development of SSE projects by offering services such as a social enterprise incubator and a business incubator. This offers project leaders a space where they can develop their ideas and initiatives;
2. **Cooperation and solidarity:** Project leaders can benefit from cooperation and solidarity within the PTCE. Members commit to working together, sharing resources and contributing to collective projects, which can be of great value to ongoing projects;
3. **Shared resources :** PTCE members contribute to the human, technical and financial resources required for the PTCE's projects and functions. This may include sharing skills, information and financial support;
4. **Innovation and R&D:** The PTCE encourages contributions to research & development (R&D). This means that project leaders have access to opportunities to innovate and develop their initiatives through collaborative research;
5. **Participatory governance:** Project leaders are involved in the governance of the PTCE. They can take part in decisions concerning the admission of new members, exits and the resolution of any conflicts;
6. **Mutual knowledge and participation:** The PTCE organises living and project spaces, including a Cooperation Committee and a Steering Committee, to promote

mutual knowledge and the participation of as many people as possible, including employees and citizens, in the PTCE's project.

The commitment to project leaders within the PTCE Sud Aquitaine is therefore focused on collaboration, resource sharing, innovation and participative governance, with the aim of actively supporting the development of social and solidarity economy initiatives in the region.

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Photos



PROJECT PARTNERS

The SEA4NEB project consortium is composed by:

