

Expanded abstract

Social economy and economic recovery after the covid-19 crisis

The crisis derived from the covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to improve and review our model of economy and society, evidencing the importance of giving greater relevance to science, the use of knowledge, and the incorporation of values related to sustainability and solidarity. The European Union has reacted with an ambitious plan, aiming to face the health and economic challenges, while safeguarding its values, seeking a fair and sustainable recovery. Based on the available financial resources, the member states have designed plans overseer to overcome the health, economic and social crisis, as the existing imbalances. The program drew up by the Spanish government, the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan, is articulated in four transversal axes, ten leverage policies, and thirty components intended to exert a significant effect on economic activity and employment.

Social Economy has an almost testimonial explicit presence in the Recovery Plan (as well as in the rest of the plans and strategies grouped under the Spain 2050 project). They seem to be unaware of the resilience generated by the network of mutual support that characterizes this type of entities and generates collective projects that combine the economic with the social and favor the development of spaces. In a country like ours, characterized by the small size of businesses, the integrating and transforming capacity of the Social Economy could be a guarantee for the proper use of European financing.

In this case, it seems that the weaknesses of many entities of the Social Economy, related to their small size, would have been harmful to the sector, as the Coronavirus crisis has hit the smaller companies. With caution due to the provisional nature of the existing data, we suggest that the pandemic has also truncated the growth trend in the sector's business size. Comparing the families of the Social Economy, with the whole Spanish productive fabric, cooperatives have been the ones that have resisted the best, both in the number of companies and in employment, and labor companies the worst. Despite this differential behavior, and the aforementioned weaknesses, we must highlight the strengths that distinguish them from the rest of the entities since they improve social welfare, generate local development, create stable employment, being transformative entities of the territories where they are based. In addition, the values and principles that they defend make them exponents of socially responsible companies and, therefore, the key to sustainable development.