

# The Social Economy in Portugal: legal regime and socio-economic characterization

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# The Social Economy in Portugal: legal regime and socio-economic characterization

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**ABSTRACT:** The main objective of this article is to provide an updated portrait of the Social Economy sector in Portugal. For this purpose, we first analyse how in Portugal the concept of Social Economy has been defined and delimited, particularly by legal means. The difficulties in establishing clear and unquestionable boundaries are highlighted, as well as the observation of the concept from the diversity that composes it, both in terms of guiding principles and of groups of entities that integrate this sector. Subsequently, a quantitative portrait of the Portuguese Social Economy is drawn, with the most recent data, made public in 2019 and for 2016, as a source. These data result from work done by the National Statistics Institute (INE - Statistics Portugal) through the Social Economy Satellite Account. In addition to the main general indicators of the sector (number of units, gross value added, main activities, groups of entities, total and paid employment), a specific analysis by groups of entities is also carried out. By making use of Satellite Account to draw this picture, we aim to provide conceptually structured statistical information with a form and content that may facilitate its subsequent use in the context of broader studies, both diachronic analysis as well as international comparisons.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Economy, Portugal, Statistics, Satellite Account, Social Economy Law.

**ECONLIT DESCRIPTORS:** B55, D71, K39, L31, P13, Y10.

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**RESUMEN:** El objetivo principal de este artículo es ofrecer un retrato actualizado del sector de la Economía Social en Portugal. Para ello se analiza, en primer lugar, cómo se ha definido y delimitado en Portugal el concepto de Economía Social, especialmente en el ámbito jurídico. En este ámbito destacan las dificultades para establecer unos límites claros e incuestionables, así como la observación del concepto desde la diversidad que lo compone, tanto en lo que se refiere a los principios rectores como a los grupos de entidades que integran este sector. Posteriormente, se dibuja un retrato cuantitativo de la Economía Social portuguesa, teniendo como fuente los datos más recientes, hechos públicos en 2019 y correspondientes a 2016. Estos datos son el resultado del trabajo realizado por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE - Statistics Portugal) a través de la Cuenta Satélite de la Economía Social. Además de los principales indicadores generales del sector (número de unidades, valor añadido bruto, principales actividades, grupos de entidades, empleo total y remunerado), se realiza un análisis específico por grupos de entidades. Con el uso de la Cuenta Satélite se pretende proporcionar una información estadística conceptualmente estructurada, con una forma y contenido que pueda facilitar su uso posterior en el contexto de estudios más amplios, tanto de análisis diacrónico como de comparaciones internacionales.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Economía Social, Portugal, Estadísticas, Cuenta Satélite, Ley de Economía Social.

# Resumen extendido

## Economía Social en Portugal: régimen jurídico y caracterización socioeconómica

### Objetivos

Portugal es uno de los países más antiguos del mundo, independiente desde 1143 y con sus fronteras prácticamente inalteradas desde finales del siglo XIII. Y casi tan larga es la historia de sus instituciones sociales, que se entrelaza con la anterior. Los primeros registros históricos se remontan a los siglos XIII y XIV, cuando se tiene constancia de la existencia de asociaciones aseguradoras y proteccionistas para hacer frente a diversos riesgos y daños. Se trata de una doble base, religiosa y laica, que da lugar a nuevas organizaciones y configura el ámbito de lo que hoy se denomina “economía social”. Poco a poco, se estructuran nuevos modelos de organización institucional, formando “una galaxia compuesta por sus constelaciones, a su vez compuestas por sus estrellas autónomas” (Namorado, 2017b: 5). Esta rica trayectoria histórica está marcada por la diversidad del tejido asociativo portugués, que se caracteriza por modelos organizativos heterogéneos pero al mismo tiempo unidos por principios y valores comunes. Bajo la denominación de “economía social” u otra, el sector goza actualmente de un amplio reconocimiento social e institucional. Sin embargo, hasta principios de este siglo este reconocimiento de la importancia de la economía social iba acompañado de un desconocimiento total de su tamaño, composición y valor económico.

Con el objetivo de contribuir a rellenar ese vacío, uno de los objetivos de este artículo es ofrecer un retrato actualizado del sector de la economía social en Portugal, a partir de los datos puestos a disposición en 2019 por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) a través de la Cuenta Satélite de la Economía Social. Al proporcionar información cuantitativa sobre la dimensión socioeconómica de la economía social portuguesa (principales indicadores económicos, recursos humanos, contribución a la riqueza nacional, análisis por grupos de entidades), se amplía el conocimiento sobre su importancia en la sociedad y la economía portuguesas. A su vez, el retrato estadístico del sector implica una clara definición y delimitación del concepto de “economía social”. Por lo tanto, este es otro de los objetivos de este artículo. En Portugal, el concepto deriva de una definición institucional, recogida en la Ley Marco de la Economía Social. Por sí mismo, el recurso a la definición jurídica no resuelve el debate sobre qué define la economía social y quién la compone. Del mismo modo, deja abiertos algunos interrogantes sobre su relación con conceptos limítrofes también utilizados en este país: tercer sector, sector no lucrativo, economía solidaria o empresas sociales. Pero, en términos operativos, fue a través de la vía institucional como se configuró una definición que subsiguientemente sirvió de base para elaborar la Cuenta Satélite.

## Diseño / metodología / aproximación

El cumplimiento de los objetivos expuestos supuso una doble estrategia de recogida y análisis de la información. En cuanto al uso y definición legal del concepto de economía social en Portugal, se trata de analizar la Ley Marco de la Economía Social (Ley nº 30/2013, de 8 de mayo), tanto desde la perspectiva de su redacción como de las implicaciones que tiene para la caracterización y delimitación del sector. A su vez, este análisis se enmarca en una reflexión más amplia sobre cómo se ha producido la consolidación del concepto en Portugal, prestando atención a diversas dimensiones de este proceso: el uso del concepto en el espacio científico y académico; la autodefinición que el sector hace de sí mismo y la forma en que las distintas familias que lo componen se reconocen en un concepto común; la circunstancia particular de que en Portugal la existencia del sector está consagrada en la Constitución de la República Portuguesa; y también la importancia de los movimientos que tienden a organizar el sector en red, acercando a los distintos grupos de entidades que lo componen: las cooperativas, las asociaciones mutualistas, las *misericórdias* (casas de misericordia), las fundaciones, las instituciones privadas de solidaridad social; las asociaciones con fines altruistas y las entidades comprendidas en los subsectores comunitario y la autogestionario.

En cuanto a la caracterización estadística del sector, se realiza una síntesis de los principales datos puestos a disposición por el INE en el ámbito de la Cuenta Satélite de la Economía Social, edición 2019. Hasta la fecha, estos son los datos más actualizados del sector en Portugal. Está prevista la publicación de una cuarta edición de la Cuenta Satélite en 2023, que informará sobre los años 2019 y 2020. Antes de la edición de 2019, que corresponde al año 2016, ya se habían publicado otras dos ediciones de la Cuenta Satélite, en 2016 (año de referencia 2013) y en 2013 (año de referencia 2010). Por ello, siempre que es posible, se realiza un análisis comparativo entre las tres ediciones disponibles.

## Resultados / Limitaciones a la investigación / implicaciones

Para el verdadero reconocimiento del sector de la economía social, y su visibilidad, se hizo fundamental la existencia de su reconocimiento legal. De forma similar a lo que ya había ocurrido en España, Grecia y Bélgica, en 2013 Portugal vio aprobada, en el Parlamento y con el voto favorable de todos los partidos, la Ley nº 30/2013, o Ley Marco de la Economía Social. Establece, entre otras dimensiones, una delimitación del concepto de economía social basada en un enfoque tripartito: la definición de economía social (artículo 2), la enumeración de las entidades que la integran (artículo 4) y la enunciación de sus principios rectores (artículo 5). En una apreciación global de la Ley, la identificación de la economía social con las “actividades socioeconómicas” es inmediatamente evidente. De este binomio se deduce que tener una actividad económica es una condición necesaria para que una entidad forme parte del sector de la economía social. Sin embargo, en la ponderación entre rentabilidad y misión social, en las entidades de la economía social la función de mando está del lado de la misión social, o sea la primacía de la persona y de los objetivos sociales, lo que las aleja de las empresas convencionales. Otro aspecto relevante es que la delimitación del concepto de economía social se realiza

sustancialmente por la vía organizativa, discriminando detalladamente qué entidades forman parte de ella y cuáles quedan excluidas de la misma (Meira, 2014). Cabe destacar la preocupación del legislador por incluir en esta delimitación a todas las entidades que tradicionalmente constituyen la columna vertebral de la economía social, como las cooperativas, las mutualidades y las fundaciones.

Desde el punto de vista estadístico, el escenario es el de un sector en crecimiento, con un peso en la economía portuguesa correspondiente al 3,0% del Valor Añadido Bruto (VAB) de la economía nacional, superando los 230 mil puestos de trabajo creados, equivalentes al 5,3% del empleo total y al 6,1% del empleo remunerado. En el ámbito de la Cuenta Satélite de la Economía Social (CSES) se identificaron más de 71 mil entidades, distribuidas en una amplia gama de actividades, entre las que destacan las de cultura, comunicación y ocio (46,9%), seguidas de las congregaciones y asociaciones religiosas (11,9%). Por su parte, los servicios sanitarios y sociales fueron los más relevantes en términos de VAB, empleo total y empleo remunerado. Por grupos de entidades, las Asociaciones con fines altruistas son el grupo más relevante en cuanto a número de entidades (92,9%), VAB (60,1%) y empleo remunerado (64,6%). A lo largo del texto también caracterizamos cada uno de los grupos de entidades que componen la economía social, de acuerdo con la legislación portuguesa. La delimitación organizativa del sector es una pieza fundamental para la posterior medición de su importancia socioeconómica.

## Conclusiones prácticas y Valor original

El sector de la economía social revela cada vez más su importancia tanto a nivel económico como social, concretamente en la Unión Europea. Con el fin de proporcionar información estadística objetiva, actualizada y comparable, cada vez más países invierten en la producción de fuentes de información basadas en instrumentos cuya fiabilidad se ha ido probando y perfeccionando, como las Cuentas Nacionales (CN) y las Cuentas Satélite complementarias. Además, existe una preocupación por conceptualizar y delimitar rigurosamente el sector, concretamente a través del marco legal. En este sentido, este artículo pretende contribuir, por un lado, a analizar cómo se ha definido y delimitado el concepto de economía social en Portugal, en particular por vía legal, y, por otro, a dibujar un retrato cuantitativo de la economía social portuguesa, tomando como fuente los datos más recientes, hechos públicos en 2019 por el Instituto Nacional de Estadística a través de la Cuenta Satélite de la Economía Social. Al hacer uso de la Cuenta Satélite para dibujar este cuadro, esperamos proporcionar información estadística conceptualmente estructurada con una forma y un contenido que puedan facilitar su posterior uso en el contexto de estudios más amplios, tanto el análisis diacrónico como la comparación internacional. Por otro lado, creemos que su contribución también es original en el sentido de que pretende llenar un vacío identificado, es decir, la inexistencia de publicaciones internacionales (concretamente en inglés) que ofrezcan una caracterización socioeconómica y cuantitativa del sector de la economía social en Portugal, basada en los datos más recientes disponibles hasta la fecha.

# 1. Introduction

Portugal is one of the oldest countries in the world, independent since 1143 and with its borders practically unchanged since the end of the 13th century. And almost as long it is the history of its social institutions. The first historical records date back to the 13th and 14th centuries, marking the existence of insurance and protectionist associations to deal with various risks and losses. In a nation with a maritime vocation, the risks and dangers of life at sea mobilize practices of solidarity and mutual assistance from an early period. At the same time, other institutions have emerged whose vocation was above all to practice charity and assistance, together with the defence of faith and peace: lodges/ hospital or hospices, children's hospitals, hostels, houses for the poor, mercearias (places where honoured women, widows, or unmarried women more than 50 years old could stay until they died) gafarias (practiced medical assistance to the leprous people), among others (Rosendo, 1996; Franco, 2005). Many of these institutions, delivering different kinds of charity and assistance, were created and managed by the Catholic Church, giving rise to a solid alliance between religious and political powers that will endure until today. It is precisely due to the influence of Queen D. Leonor, wife of D. João II, that in 1498 a new type of institution arises in Portugal, the Misericórdias or Holy Houses of Mercy, with the foundation of the Holy House of Mercy of Lisbon.

It is that dual base, both religious and secular, that is giving rise to new organizations and shaping the field of what is currently called "Social Economy". Gradually, new models of institutional organization are added to the existing ones, forming what Rui Namorado calls "a galaxy made up of its constellations, in turn composed of its autonomous stars" (2017b: 5). The 19th century was marked by the emergence of the mutualist movement, either through the mobilization of workers and agricultural workers (agricultural mutuals, farmer and peasant unions, humanitarian institutions of voluntary fireman) or through business associations (Montepio Geral, commercial associations, among others). It was also during the 19th century that the cooperative movement began to acquire expression in Portugal, whose own identity was greatly strengthened by the intellectual vision of António Sérgio, a philosopher, pedagogue, and politician who, exiled to Paris to escape the dictatorial regime established in Portugal from 1926 onwards, learned about it and was influenced by the thought of Charles Gide. More recently, in the second half of the 20th century, the Portuguese State shaped and granted to many of these organizations the status of Private Institution of Social Solidarity (IPSS).

This rich historical path is marked by the fruitfulness of the Portuguese associative universe, which is characterized by heterogeneous organizational models, but at the same time united by common principles and values: "Social economy entities form a plural sector, with very different organic realities, in shape, dimension, object, and operating logic. In this institutional ark, there are cooperatives, mutual societies, holy houses of mercy, associations, foundations and self-managed and community entities, whose common denominator is that they are organizations of people who develop activities to satisfy people's needs, in a sustainable way, and without the purpose of remunerating capitalist investors, which in principle they do not have" (Pitacas & Sá, 2018: 143). Under the designation of "Social Economy" (SE) or other,

the sector enjoys broad social and institutional recognition, immediately visible in the way in which the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic enshrines the existence in the country of three sectors in the ownership of the means of production, and names the “cooperative and social sector” alongside the public and private sectors. According to some authors, this constitutional consecration is perhaps unique in the world (Sá, 2013) and makes Portugal a precursor country in this field (Gire, 2014).

However, until the beginning of this century, the recognition of the SE importance was accompanied by a total lack of knowledge about its size, composition, and economic value. Despite some academic works and studies promoted by organizations or confederations of the sector, no concrete data were available to characterize it statistically and to compare it with similar sectors in other countries. But in 2013 that the scenario changed significantly with the presentation by the national statistical agency, INE - Statistics Portugal, of the first results of the pilot project of the Social Economy Satellite Account (SASE) for the year 2010 and the pilot survey on voluntary work 2012. Two more SASE editions have been published so far, for the reference years 2013 and 2016, with publication in 2016 and 2019 respectively.

One of the objectives of this article is to provide an updated portrait of the SE sector in Portugal, based on data made available in 2019 by the National Statistics Institute (INE - Statistics Portugal) through the Social Economy Satellite Account (SASE). With the availability of quantitative information on the socio-economic dimension of the Portuguese SE (main economic indicators, human resources, contribution to national wealth, analysis by groups of entities), knowledge is broadened regarding its importance in Portuguese society and economy.

On the other hand, when concrete realities are described and measured through common and stable concepts, conditions of comparability both in time and space are created. It is in this sense that the use of an instrument that receives increasing international recognition, such as the satellite accounts, becomes pertinent. In this regard, it should be acknowledged that the inclusion of the Portuguese case in international comparative analyses has been scarce and very punctual, despite some efforts already undertaken (Campos, 2008, 2009; Salamon, Sokoloski, Hadoock & Tice, 2012; Ávila, Campos, Uralde & Radrigán, 2013; EESC / CIRIEC-International, 2017). With this text, we aim to reinforce this possibility and provide data for an updated view of international scope.

Finally, the nature of the present work justifies that particular attention is also given to the due clarification of the concept of “Social Economy” which underpins empirical analysis through statistical data. Within the present circumstances, the concept derives from an institutional definition, inscribed in the Social Economy Framework Law. In itself, the use of an institutional definition does not solve the heated debate on what defines and who makes up the SE, also in Portugal. In the same way, it leaves open questions as to its relationship with neighboring concepts, also used in our country. However, in operational terms, it was through the institutional approach that a definition was configured and later served as the basis for the satellite account.

The latter will end up being the first task to be accomplished, in a text that is structured in four sections. After this introduction, the first section analyses how in Portugal the SE concept



has been defined and delimited, in the scientific field, from the professional-entrepreneurial point of view and in the political and legislative sphere. The difficulties in establishing clear and unquestionable boundaries are highlighted, as well as its relationship with similar concepts. In the following point, the attention is focused on the legal recognition of the SE in our country, based on a Law that establishes a conceptual definition, enumerates the entities that integrate it, and states its guiding principles. This point also presents the groups of entities that, in the light of the referred Law, integrate the SE. The penultimate section of the text is that in which the Portuguese SE is statistically characterized, based on the most up-to-date information on the sector. Finally, some concluding notes are written.

## 2. The use of the Social Economy concept in Portugal

As Rafael Chaves (2006) recalls, the consolidation of the SE has been taking place in several fields, three of which stand out: in the scientific field, with different schools of thought and intellectual traditions proposing different visions as to the inner dimensions of the concept, and its delimitation concerning analogous concepts; from the professional - business field, to which the self-definition that the sector makes of itself and how the different stakeholders recognize themselves in a common concept contribute largely, in addition to the specific marks that identify each of the groups of entities that make up this institutional mosaic; and also in the political and legislative sphere, through the legal recognition of the concept, desirably based on broad consensus and with a capacity to endure over time.

The Portuguese case is no exception in this broad debate in search of the best definition. In the study *Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union* (EESC / CIRIEC-International, 2017), Portugal is presented as one of the countries in Europe where the SE concept is widely accepted and used. Under the classification adopted, in this country it enjoys the greatest recognition by public authorities as well as by the SE sector itself, while in the academic and scientific world the concept benefits from a moderate level of recognition. Overall, Portugal compares to Spain, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Since we do not have a reliable metric that allows us to compare Portugal to other countries in terms of the level of appropriation of the SE concept by the scientific and academic field, we are nevertheless witnesses to the way it has been used and deepened by different authors and in various studies. Throughout this text, we will have the opportunity to mention some of them and make use of their contributions. On the other hand, we should also note the existence of academic courses in Portuguese universities, particularly at the post-graduate level, which focuses on the study of the various areas of SE. As in other countries, the academic discussion on this concept is guided by the diversity of positions. From the perspective of some authors, the SE concept, being recent, is the corollary of a long historical journey and serves as a designation for "...a diverse set of organizational traditions and social movements that have come

together in a growing interaction, often encouraged by institutional interventions” (Namorado, 2017b: 28). Others, in turn, base their choice on the “... recognition of the ethical virtues of social economy as a model capable of responding to social problems in good articulation with the social functions of the State”. (Garrido, 2016: 21). And, as a result, they tend to restrict the denomination of “social economy organizations” to those that respect a set of operating and organizational principles: non-profit, oriented towards the satisfaction of social needs, free membership, democratic management, one person one vote... And others, still, invoke the path of institutional consecration of the realities covered by the SE, namely within the framework of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of 1976 and subsequent constitutional revisions, to advocate the merits and greater adaptability of an institutionalized definition to the Portuguese reality (Campos, 1991; Reis, 2006).

In the professional - business field, the perception that we obtain from our contact with the entities that make up the SE in Portugal, is that the recognition in a common concept does not yet overlap with the specific marks that identify each group of entities. The history of invocation and defense of cooperative, associative, or mutualist specificities is much longer, in the face of an aggregating concept that is more recent and whose recognition as such still lacks consolidation. In this context, it is worth mentioning the work done by some confederate organizations (Union of Portuguese Mutualities, Union of Portuguese Holy Houses of Mercy, National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions, Portuguese Foundation Centre or Portuguese Cooperative Confederation) in favor of advocating a proper identity culture, as well as the promotion and representation of particular interests before the State and other sectors.

Such facts do not prevent that in recent years, particularly from the late 1970s of the last century, in Portugal as in other European countries, the idea of SE, or rather of a “new social economy”, has been gaining space and notoriety (Garrido and Pereira, 2018). As observed, its (re)emergence results from a double movement of “... self-recognition stimulated and sedimented by a convergent State intervention” (Namorado, 2019: 65). On the one hand, the willingness of the distinct organizational families to share a broader identity, beyond their specific identity. On the other hand, the availability and interest on the part of the State to institute, by Law and by cooperation practices, its existence.

As mentioned, the consolidation of the SE concept in Portugal was strongly influenced by the political power, even if it has not always been favorable to it. In the history of a country with a long associative tradition, there have been moments when the alliance between the State and the third sector was shaken by an authoritarian intervention from the latter. One of these moments occurred in the 20th century, with the coup d'état of 28 May 1926, and the creation of the Estado Novo or “New Order”. Under the leadership of António de Oliveira Salazar, the established authoritarian regime, which in many of its orientations resembled identical regimes in force in Germany, Italy or Spain, included freedom of association in the range of freedoms to be restricted, under the allegation that they questioned the national interest and exposed it to foreign interests. Under the idea of a society organized into interested-based pillars supporting the political regime, the State abolished political parties and began regulating forms of association. For workers, peasants, fishermen, farmers, and businessmen, it became compul-

sory to be members of their sector or local representative association. Houses of the People (Casas do Povo) and Houses of Fishermen (Casas dos Pescadores) as representatives of the fishermen and farmworkers, the Guilds (Grémios) as organizations of industrialists, farmers and businessmen (Franco, Sokolowski, Hairel & Salamon, 2005). The cooperative movement has also been severely restricted, with cooperatives being closed down and others being led by representatives of local authorities (Campos, 2009). This situation continued until 25 April 1974, when the Carnation Revolution, led by the armed forces movement, liberated the country from authoritarian power and restored the right to freedom.

The socialist inspiration of the April revolution strongly influenced the drafting of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CRP), in 1976. Under a political-ideological orientation that advocated, in the field of economic-social organization, "...the development of socialist relations of production, through the collective appropriation of the main means of production and soils, as well as natural resources, and the exercise of democratic power by the working classes", not only the right of association was constitutionally consecrated, but also the creation and activity of cooperatives was encouraged (Article 84). All this against the backdrop of the guarantee of coexistence between three sectors of property, namely, the public sector, the cooperative sector and the private sector (Article 89). That is, the constitutional principle of autonomy and protection of the cooperative sector. In the post-revolution period, the valorization of the cooperative spirit did not only occur at the political-ideological level, but also materialized through the expansion of the sector and its importance in the Portuguese economy and society. Take the example of the Agrarian Reform, which led to the expropriation of the latifundia in the south of the country and the transfer of their management to collective production units (UCP), registered as production cooperatives (Garrido and Pereira, 2018: 258). Or the multiplication of cooperative experiences in the fishing, housing and consumption sectors, or even in education.

Subsequently, with the 1989 constitutional amendment, the former "cooperative sector" was renamed as "social and cooperative sector" and its scope expanded to include not only the cooperative sub-sector but also the community and self-managed sub-sectors. In 1997, a new constitutional revision was reflected in yet another alteration, specifically the addition of the solidarity sub-sector. In this sense, the sector has now included private institutions of social solidarity of both an associative and a foundational nature. On the one hand, to these modifications will not be strange the alteration of the Constitution's ideological matrix of reference, relieved of its tendentially socialist orientation and, as a consequence, tending towards a limitation of the exclusive area of intervention by the public sector. This, in turn, gave a new tone to the relations between the State and the organizations of the cooperative and social sector, assigning to those an increased responsibility in the provision of social services, under the tutelage and financing by the former.

That evolution led to the current wording of the constitutional text, in which the "cooperative and social sector" specifically comprises 'a) the means of production owned and managed by cooperatives, in compliance with cooperative principles, without prejudice to the specific features established by law for cooperatives with public participation, justified by their special na-

ture; b) the community means of production owned and managed by local communities; c) the means of production which are the object of collective exploitation by workers; d) the means of production owned and managed by non-profit-making legal persons whose main objective is social solidarity, in particular entities of a mutualist nature.” (Article 82 of the CRP). In short, a sector composed of four subsectors: cooperative, self-managed, community, and solidarity. “Thus, the State, from its own legal-constitutional identity, has been able to harmoniously welcome the identity assumed by the whole social economy” (Namorado, 2017a: 4). Even though in the constitutional text there is no explicit reference to the term “Social Economy”.

Legal recognition and legal definition of the SE only occur later, in 2013, with the creation of the Social Economy Framework Law (Law no. 30/2013, of May 8). The legal reinforcement of the concept is undoubtedly one of the most important steps in determining how the social SE is understood and used in Portugal today. Among other aspects, Law no. 30/2013 regulates an operational definition of the concept, which has an institutional basis and privileges the conceptualization of the SE centered on the type of organizations that comprise it: on the one hand, the mandatory inclusion of all organizations linked to the “old” social economy, such as Cooperatives, Mutual Associations, Holy Houses of Mercy and Foundations; on the other hand, the opening of the concept to a “new” SE, by contemplating the equal integration of other Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, of Associations acting in the cultural, recreational, sports and local development areas, and also of other entities “that respect the guiding principles of the social economy, provided for in Article 5 of the Law”.

Beyond its consecration on the legal level, another movement was fundamental to the institution of the SE in Portugal: we are specifically talking about the initiatives undertaken to bring the different “constellations” of this “galaxy” closer together and organize it into a network, also making it a stronger player in cooperation with the State and in the co-production of public policies (Pitacas & Sá, 2018). The State was precisely one of the main drivers of the process of bringing together the various components of the SE (Namorado, 2019: 83), much through the creation of entities that could represent the sector univocally.

One of the most relevant examples is that of INSCOOP - António Sérgio Institute for the Cooperative Sector, created in 1976 by ministerial initiative, later transformed into CASES - António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy. As a public institute, INSCOOP was oriented towards the promotion of the cooperative sector, accompanying the growth of this sector in Portugal. Its extinction and transition to CASES in 2009 meant, among other changes, the attribution of responsibility for promoting the strengthening of the SE sector as a whole. Statutorily defined as a Cooperative of public interest (or *régie cooperative*), the State is part of its governing bodies, as well as other entities representing the various families of the social economy: ANIMAR - Portuguese Association for Local Development; CNIS - National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions; UMP - Union of Portuguese Holy Houses of Mercy; CONFECOOP - Portuguese Cooperative Confederation, C.C.R.L.; CONFAGRI - National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Portuguese Agricultural Credit; and UMP - Union of Portuguese Mutualities. Among its vast attributions, are those of promoting the sector’s growth, the defense and dissemination of its values and principles, the stimulation of the economic and social activity of the organizations, as well as their empowerment and reinforcement of public visibility.

The creation of the CNES - National Council for the Social Economy, in 2010, was also a State initiative, functioning as a monitoring and advisory body to the Government in the field of strategies and public policies for SE promotion and development. In addition to having in its composition the main federative entities and personalities of recognized merit and experience in the SE sector, the fact that the Prime Minister (or the relevant minister on his behalf) directly assumes the presidency of the Council is indicative of the importance attributed by the public authorities to this sector even before the publication of its Framework Law.

In addition to these two initiatives, other milestones in the consolidation of the common identity and networking spirit within the SE should also be mentioned. Firstly, the creation of the Portuguese Training Network for the Third Sector, in 1997, where once again the association of interests between the State, via the direct involvement of INSCOOP in the process, civil society organizations and, on the education side, polytechnics and universities is evident (Namorado, 2019). Moreover, and as already mentioned, the Academy has also been involved in this dynamic, whether through the organization of colloquia and events on the social economy theme, or also through short courses and training on this theme. More recently, following the organization of the 1st Social Economy Congress, nine entities representing the different families of the SE decided to join forces and create the Portuguese Confederation of the Social Economy (CPES), in June 2018. Two notes stand out from its constitution: on the one hand, and in an unprecedented way in relation to the other initiatives mentioned above, this federative structure was created from the direct initiative of the entities in the sector, advocating itself “independent from the State” (Article 4 of the Statutes), but available to be its interlocutor; on the other hand, it is an important step in sharing a broader identity, that of belonging to the SE, beyond the specific identity of each legal status.

The growing use of the SE concept does not invalidate the fact that in Portugal other conceptual definitions have already been and continue to be used, often proposed as competitors or as alternatives to the first: third sector, nonprofit sector, solidarity economy, or social enterprises. Less common is the use of the non-governmental organization or civil society organization concepts.

The terms “third sector” and “nonprofit”, derived from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, share the characteristic of delimiting the respective concept to those organizations which, under their constitutive rules, cannot distribute financial benefits among their members. Consequently, they leave out of their scope those other organizations which, being also formal, private, independent, and voluntary, do not respect the principle of non-distribution of profits to their members. This means in practice the exclusion, at least partially, of two types of organizations traditionally identified with the social economy, namely Mutualities and Cooperatives. In Portugal, the denomination of third sector is commonly used in studies and analyses (Almeida, 2008; Carvalho, 2010; Ferreira, 2015), as well as appearing in some official documents. In turn, the conceptual delimitation of the nonprofit sector served as the basis for the first measurement exercise of the Portuguese civil society (Franco, Sokolowski, Hairel & Salamon, 2005) and, later, for a new edition of the study in 2012 (Salamon, Sokolowski, Haddock & Tice, 2012).

The use of the expression “solidarity economy” assumes two distinct perspectives: in one case, by integrating the composite concept of “social and solidarity economy”, in which it represents the non-market and solidarity part, as opposed to the mercantile sub-sector that is also part of it; in another, it assumes a more political component and identifies the affirmation of a global alternative to capitalism. According to Roque Amaro, the experiences of solidarity economy developed in the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira (Portugal), the Autonomous Region of the Canary Islands (Spain) and the Republic of Cape Verde make up a particular version of solidarity economy, which the author calls the “Macaronesian version” (Amaro, 2009). It will be characterized by a systemic logic of solidarity, in the sense that it encompasses all expressions of life and a wide variety of dimensions in human relations, from economic to social, cultural, environmental, territorial, scientific, and political (Hespanha, 2011).

Despite some pressures, the figure of “social enterprises” was not contemplated by the Social Economy Framework Law. Even so, the concept is increasingly present and competes with others in the identification of certain organizational models or management forms, particularly those resulting from civil society initiatives and incorporating a pragmatic “business model” in the provision of social services and/or goods and services to vulnerable persons, as well as in the fight against poverty and social exclusion through socio-professional insertion and/or reintegration. It has been applied, for example, to the case of “insertion companies” which, which, as experienced in other countries, were created in the 1990s of the last century and lasted until 2015. This designation was assigned to non-profit legal organizations (Association, Cooperative, Foundation or Private Charitable Institution), or created and managed by entities with this status, which, operating according to business management models, aimed at the social-professional reinsertion of the long-term unemployed or those in a situation of disfavor to the labor market (Hespanha, 2019). In recent years, public financing measures such as Portugal Inovação Social (Portugal Social Innovation) have encouraged and supported the emergence of initiatives pointed at responding to social problems by adopting a logic of social entrepreneurship and social innovation. The designation of social enterprises is often used for their identification. In a similar vein, a definition of “social enterprise” is inscribed in the 2017 Public Procurement Code that is in line with the above interpretations (Garrido and Pereira, 2018). Therefore, it may be stated that, as Portuguese law does not contemplate this legal type, a legal status for this type of companies is gradually being identified (Pereira, 2019).

### 3. The legal recognition of Social Economy

For the true recognition of the SE sector and its visibility, the existence of a legal regime has become fundamental. This same idea, that “the inexistence of a legal definition of the concept of Social Economy has weakened its potential for development and affirmation in the current

socio-economic context...”, was expressed in Bill no. 68/XII, which initiated and framed the debate among political parties aimed at drafting the new Law. As had already happened in Spain, Greece, and Belgium, in 2013 Portugal saw the approval, in Parliament and with the favorable vote of all parties, of Law no. 30/2013, or Social Economy Framework Law (SEFL). It establishes, among other dimensions, a delimitation of the SE concept based on a tripartite approach: the definition of the social economy (Article 2), the enumeration of the entities that integrate it (Article 4), and the enunciation of its guiding principles (Article 5).

Starting with the definition: “1 - Social economy shall mean all economic and social activities freely carried out by entities referred to in article 4 of this law. 2 - The activities provided for in paragraph 1 aim pursuing the general interest of society, either directly or through the pursuit of the interests of its members, users and beneficiaries, when socially relevant” (Article 2 of SEFL). The SE definition is complemented, first of all, with a list of the entities that integrate it, as long as they are constituted in the national territory (Article 4): “a) Cooperatives; b) Mutual associations; c) Holy houses of mercy; d) Foundations; e) Private institutions of social solidarity not covered by the preceding paragraphs; f) Associations with altruistic purposes that act in the cultural, recreational, sports and local development field; g) Entities covered by the community and self-managed subsectors, integrated under the terms of the Constitution in the cooperative and social sector; h) Other entities with legal personality that comply with the guiding principles of the social economy, as provided for in Article 5 of this Law, and which are included in the social economy database”. And it is also accompanied by the statement of its guiding principles (Article 5): “a) The primacy of people and social objectives; b) Free and voluntary membership and participation; c) Democratic control of the respective bodies by its members; d) Reconciliation between the interest of members, users or beneficiaries and the general interest; e) Respect for the values of solidarity, equality, and non-discrimination, social cohesion, justice and equity, transparency, shared individual and social responsibility, and subsidiarity; (f) management that is autonomous and independent from public authorities and any other entities outside the social economy; (g) the allocation of surpluses to the pursuit of the objectives of the social economy entities in accordance with the general interest, without prejudice to any specificity of surpluses distribution, peculiar to the nature and substratum of each social economy entity, constitutionally established”.

In a global appraisal of the Law, the identification of the SE with that of “economic and social activities” is immediately obvious. From this binomial, it follows that having an economic activity is a necessary condition for an entity to integrate the SE sector. There is a part of the entities’ activity which brings them closer to conventional companies and which relates to the production of goods and services, the assumption of an economic risk (in the sense that resources are not guaranteed) and the creation of employment (Ferreira, 2019). However, this activity does not have a profitable purpose but is subordinated to the primacy of people and social objectives. In other words, it is directed primarily towards the satisfaction of social interests, whether they derive from the general interest of society or aim to satisfy the needs of its members, users, and beneficiaries. And it respects, in its management, the democratic and participatory principles of decision-making. All these characteristics, together with the

respect for values that contribute towards a fairer, more cohesive and solidary society, give a decisive weight to the social component in the aforementioned binomial. In the balance between profitability and social mission, in SE activities the command function is on the side of the social mission, or the primacy of the person and social objectives, which distances them from conventional companies.

Another relevant aspect is that the delimitation of the SE concept is substantially done via the organizational route, by discriminating in detail which entities are part of it and which are excluded from it (Meira, 2014). The legislator's concern to include in this delimitation all the entities that traditionally constitute the backbone of the SE, such as Cooperatives, Mutual Societies and Foundations, should be noted. At the same time, it serves to value the whole while safeguarding the identity of each group in the SE, which has its own specific legislation. However, the Law also stipulates that the legal form is not the only criterion for inclusion to the extent that, in paragraph h) of article 4, it admits the integration, on a case by case basis, of entities with another legal personality as long as they "respect the guiding principles of the social economy", duly set out in the subsequent article 5. Not only from the legal but also from the sociological standpoint, this binding of the entities that make up the SE to a set of guiding principles for their activity makes it even more relevant to understand that the sector's delimitation is not merely statutory but rather translates a singular form of exercising management activities and the provision of social services. Within the scope of which there are values and principles that cannot be alienated, for example, in favor of greater efficiency or productivity.

From this last point also derives the idea that the SE activity is not only relevant from the economic and social point of view, as the Law determines, but also acquires important political resonances. We speak specifically of the way these entities are encouraged to incorporate in their intervention a clear democratic and participative orientation, in the sense of a decision-making power not based on capital ownership, of the democratic management of the bodies, of the participative character and free membership, of the duty of transparency, and of autonomy and independence in management. But also in the respect, and consequent defense, of the social values of solidarity, equality and non-discrimination, social cohesion, justice and equity, among others. In other words, the Portuguese law advocates and "encourages" (article 1) SE to pursue its own distinctive identity based on ethical values with a democratic, solidary and humanist root.

In the remainder of this point, we will provide a brief characterization of each group of entities that make up the SE, by Portuguese Law. The organizational delimitation of the sector is a fundamental piece for the subsequent measurement of its socio-economic importance.

### a) Cooperatives

"Cooperatives are autonomous legal persons, of a free constitution, of variable capital and composition, which, through the cooperation and mutual assistance of their members, in obedience to the cooperative principles, aim, without profit, to satisfy the economic, social or cultural needs and aspirations of those members" (Law No. 119/2015). With a population of ten



million, Portugal has about two million people who are members of Cooperatives (Campos, 2008: 47). The numerical expression and the historical weight of the cooperative movement were decisive factors for the design of the Portuguese social economy Law, which reflects a visible influence of the cooperative identity, particularly concerning the constitution and functioning ethics.

There are records of Cooperatives in Portugal since the mid-19th century. The Association of Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres, a consumer cooperative born in 1844, is identified as the first Portuguese cooperative (Garrido and Pereira, 2018). In 1867, the so-called Lei Basilar das Cooperativas (Cooperatives Framework Law) was published, the first legal text for the cooperative sector, which gave the necessary impulse to the creation of new cooperative type organizations. If throughout the first half of the 20th century the cooperative movement was seriously limited in its activity, as a consequence of the mistrust with which the Estado Novo viewed it, the creation of Cooperatives registered a strong impulse following April 1974 revolution. Between 1975 and 1979, 417 co-operatives were created, i.e. more than the number registered between 1858 and 1974. In each subsequent decade, more than 300 new entities were created (INE / CASES, 2019).

Legally, the cooperative sector operates in several branches: a) Agriculture; b) Craftsmanship; c) Marketing; d) Consumers; e) Credit; f) Culture; g) Education; h) Housing and construction; i) Fishing; j) Workers' production; k) Services; l) Social solidarity. All Cooperatives that operate in these different branches are part of the SE sector, with only a few exceptions, such as mutual agricultural credit banks, schools, universities, and research centers. On the other hand, *régies cooperativas* are included, which are cooperatives of public interest with the direct participation of the State.

## b) Mutual Associations

Mutual Associations, or mutual societies or mutual aid associations, "... are legal persons under private law, of associative nature, with an unlimited number of members, variable patrimonial funds and indefinite duration which, essentially, through mutual aid and the contribution of their members, practice, in the interest of these and their families and obedience to the mutual principles, purposes of mutual aid of social protection and human development, under the terms foreseen in this Code." (Decree-Law No 59/2018).

The Mutual Associations were born a little before the cooperatives, the first Portuguese mutual association, the *Sociedade dos Artistas Lisbonenses*, dating from 1838. At the same time, Portugal was one of the first countries to have specific legislation on mutualism, just after Germany (1883) and Italy (1886). This recognition was consummated in 1891 (Garrido, 2016). Recently, the phenomenon of the emergence of large associations, one of them with about 600,000 members, led the political power to approve a new legal code and to appeal for respect about the founding values of mutualism, particularly concerning the democratic functioning of organizations.

Unlike Cooperatives, the typology of the activities of Mutual Associations is less diverse, focusing on financial activities, health and welfare, and social action. All Mutual Associations are entities of the SE, just as they all have the legal status of a “Private Institution of Social Solidarity”. Most Mutual Associations are affiliated to the Union of Portuguese Mutualities.

### c) Holy Houses of Mercy

The Holy Houses of Mercy (or *Misericórdias*) constitute the group of SE entities with the most backward constitution dates in Portuguese history (Ruano, Manso, Valenciano & Rumí, 2020). 1498 is pointed as the foundation date of the first Holy House of Mercy in Portugal, in Lisbon, under the responsibility and sponsorship of D. Leonor, wife of King D. João II. From that date on, Holy Houses of Mercy spread throughout the Portuguese territory, to the island regions of Madeira and the Azores, and, at the time, to the overseas provinces that were part of the Portuguese Empire. Since their origin, these organizations have maintained a strong link with the State, although they benefit from autonomous management and own resources.

The Brotherhoods of Mercy or Holy Houses of Mercy are associations established in the canonical legal order with aims of satisfying social needs and practicing acts of Catholic worship, in harmony with their traditional spirit, determined by the morality and the principles of Christian doctrine (INE / CASES, 2013). Statutorily, the *Misericórdias* are constituted from the will of a group of citizens - hence their nature of a brotherhood - and all of them are guided by the same objective: to provide support to the community by fulfilling the 14 works of Mercy, 7 of a spiritual nature and 7 of material nature. The support given to the community by the brotherhoods is essentially based on social responses (for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, among other publics) and in the health area (residential structures, hospitals, clinics, long-term care, among others). They also develop important work in the area of Heritage.

All Holy Houses of Mercy have the status of a Private Institution of Social Solidarity. They are globally represented by the Union of Portuguese Holy Houses of Mercy.

### d) Foundations

“1 - A foundation is a legal person, not for profit, endowed with a sufficient patrimony and irrevocably allocated to the pursuit of a social interest purpose. 2 - Social interest purposes are considered to be those that translate into the benefit of one or more categories of persons other than the founder, his relatives and related, or persons or entities linked to him by relations of friendship or business...” (Law No. 150/2015). The purposes of social interest pursued may take multiple forms, including assistance to persons with disabilities, prevention and eradication of poverty, promotion of citizenship and protection of human rights, promotion of the arts, and combating any form of illegal discrimination.

In Portugal, Foundations are a relatively recent phenomenon, which had its first recognition in the Civil Code of 1867. The 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century were particularly marked by the emergence of new foundational entities.

The inclusion of Foundations in the group of entities that make up the SE sector raises some doubts, to the extent that these organizations do not formally respect all the guiding principles (García & Gonzalez, 2011). In particular, the fact that the control of the respective bodies is made by their “founder” and is not oriented towards an open and democratic control formula. Such critical observation does not only arise from external voices, but also from within the foundational movement itself, advocating that “... it is absurd to seek to apply to Foundations guiding principles that are inherent to entities of an associative nature” (Rosa, 2017). In the absence of an official justification for this dissonance, we are pushed into the speculative field and led to agree with the argument that the Law will have followed the so-called “european concept” (Garrido and Pereira, 2018), which considers four major families: Cooperatives, Mutualities, Associations and Foundations. According to this orientation, Foundations have been recognized in most countries as members of the SE sector (Ávila, Campos, Uralde & Radrigán, 2013). Another explanation may be that, since the status of a Private Institution of Social Solidarity was previously granted to a part of the Foundations, more specifically to the social solidarity foundations, their integration in the social and solidarity sector was already recognized and, as such, transposable to the new Law.

#### e) Private charitable institutions not covered by the above subparagraphs

Private Institution of Social Solidarity, or IPSS, is an entity created without lucrative purpose, by the initiative of individuals, to give organized expression to the moral duty of solidarity and justice among individuals and that is not administered by the State or by a local government body (Decree-Law No. 172-A/2014). The IPSS are active in the fields of childhood and youth, elderly care, health, social action, education and training, and housing.

The IPSS statute is a specificity in the Portuguese legal system, which the legislator decided to include in the group of entities that can integrate the SE sector. It is a statute that must be requested and, therefore, granted. In addition to being granted by nature and definition to Mutual Societies and Holy Houses of Mercy, and being able to benefit Cooperatives, Foundations and Social Solidarity Associations that so require, this statute can be given to People’s Houses and other entities not included in traditional families of the SE. In other words, it opens the concept to other entities, whose mode of organization and management are compatible with the guiding principles that characterize the sector.

#### f) Associations with altruistic purposes acting in the cultural, recreational, sports and local development fields

“The right to free association constitutes a basic guarantee for the personal fulfilment of individuals in society. The rule of law, respectful of the person, cannot impose limits on the free constitution of associations other than those directly and necessarily required to safeguard the superior and general interests of the political community”. (Decree-Law 594/74). Since 1974, Portuguese legislation has enshrined and protected the right to free association.

An Association is a legal person made up of natural and/or legal persons, with non-profit purposes, grouped around common goals and needs. They have an unlimited number of members, undetermined capital, and indefinite duration.

Associations have been created in the most varied fields of action and with very diverse purposes. However, the SE Law restricts integration in this sector to those Associations that operate in the cultural, recreational, sports, and local development fields, in compliance with the respective guiding principles. Some examples are the Cultural and Sports Centers, the People's Houses, the Popular Education Associations, and the Local Development Associations.

### **g) Entities covered by the community and self-managed sub-sectors, integrated under the Constitution in the cooperative and social sector**

The entities in this subsector are those with a more recent constitution, having already emerged in the middle of the 20th century. Likewise, they are a novelty in the last satellite account elaborated in Portugal, already as a consequence of its integration under the Law approved in the meantime. In this group of organizations, which aim to solve problems common to a group or a community, common lands (Baldios) and self-managed companies stand out.

Baldio is a type of property specifically communal in nature, owned and managed by local communities according to custom and usage. The common land is managed by the co-owners, i.e. by all citizens residing in the area where the corresponding property is located, following the customs and practices recognized by the local communities (Law No 75/2017). The common land associative movement is represented by the National Federation of the Common Land.

Self-managed companies are also part of this sub-universe, consisting of an organization/company democratically managed by its worker-owners, who participate in the administrative decisions on equal terms.

## **4. Characterization of the Portuguese Social Economy**

### **4.1. About the Social Economy Satellite Account (SESA)**

Statistical information on the SE sector in Portugal, and on the groups of organizations that comprise it, has been made available in two ways: on the one hand, through piecemeal analyses that focus on a sub-sector; on the other, through more global portraits that characterize the whole sector and make use of internationally validated statistical instruments. The first group includes examples of studies on social solidarity NGOs (Veiga, Cruz, Pegado & Saleiro, 2011), Private Social Solidarity Institutions (Sousa et al, 2012), Cooperatives (CIRIEC - Portugal, s / d;

CASES, 2018; CASES, 2021) or the Holy Houses of Mercy (UMP, 2019), which provide primary data on the organizations concerned. Regarding the second group of analyses, the inclusion of Portugal in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, in a first publication in 2005 (Franco, Sokolowski, Hairel & Salamon, 2005) and, later, a new edition in 2012, deserves mention.

The involvement of the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the use of the Satellite Accounts methodology become crucial for the production of more extensive empirical analyses that are better adapted to the Portuguese reality. Following the publication, in 2011, of the results of a first pilot project using the Satellite Account of Non-Profit Institutions to characterize this sector, in 2013 the national statistics agency released a more robust edition already called as Social Economy Satellite Account (SESA) for the year 2010. To date, two further editions of SESA have been published, in 2016 (reference year 2013) and in 2019 (reference year 2016). The analysis presented here is based on the latest version, which provides the most up-to-date data<sup>1</sup> on the socio-economic dimension of the SE sector in Portugal.

SESA 2016 is incorporated into the conceptual framework of the Portuguese National Accounts System (PNAS). As a satellite of National Accounts (NA), its main goal is to provide economic information on SE, following the concepts and methods of NA, defined in the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA 2010). In its preparation, they were also taken into account the concepts, methods, classifications and accounting rules of the United Nations “Handbook on Non-profit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work”, of 2018, and those of the “Manual for drawing up the satellite accounts of companies in the social economy: co-operatives and mutual societies” from the CIRIEC. Since the 2013 version, SESA also has as its main methodological reference the Social Economy Framework Law (Law no. 30/2013, of May 8), which, among other issues, establishes the type of entities that should integrate the SE.

Classified by its administrators as an unprecedented project in international terms due to its scope and versatility (Ramos, 2020), SESA fulfils the need for more systematized knowledge on the economic dimension and the main characteristics of the Portuguese SE, while also constituting a reference instrument for defining public policies for the sector. In this sense, the Law on the Social Economy stipulates the obligation to create and update “a satellite account for the social economy, developed within the framework of the national statistical system”, in the same way as it attributes to the Government the responsibility to elaborate, publish and maintain a permanent database on social economy entities (article 6). These tasks having been delegated to CASES, SESA’s production ended up as the result of a cooperation protocol between the latter and INE.

Naturally, quantitative mapping is only part in the understanding of such a multifaceted domain as the entities that make up this “galaxy”. Other dimensions that arise from organizational culture, territorial insertion, self-recognition of their social role and function, just to mention a few examples, are equally fundamental. But when properly articulated with other detailed studies on these dimensions, the quantitative analysis adds clairvoyance and importance to them.

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*1. According to information provided by INE, the fourth edition of the SESA, for the years 2019 and 2020, will be released in 2023.*

Finally, when concrete realities are described and measured through common and stable concepts, conditions are created for comparability both in time and space. The use of an internationally recognized instrument, such as the Satellite Accounts, not only makes it possible to produce a diachronic analysis of the sector, but also creates conditions for international comparisons. Naturally, always mindful of the different understandings and methods required by the particularities of each national reality.

## 4.2. Main results

According to the SESA results, in 2016, the SE sector was composed of 71,885 entities, which generated 3.0% of national Gross Value Added (GVA), and represented 5.3% of total employment and 6.1% of paid employment (in both cases, measured in Full Time Equivalent units – FTE). The average compensation of employees by FTE in SE entities corresponded to 86.3% of the national average. This sector still represented 3.8% of the national Gross Capital Formation (GCF).

Although some conceptual changes have been introduced between the different editions of SESA, they are not substantially reflected in the overall delimitation of the SE sector. Thus, and taking into account the publication to date of 3 editions of SESA (2010, 2013 and 2016), we now have information that allows us to contextualize the evolution of the importance of SE in the Portuguese economy.

Based on this analysis exercise, it can be seen that the SE sector has been growing in terms of its weight in wealth production and job creation. When compared with the figures for 2013, there has been positive growth in all the dimensions analyzed, with an increase of 17.3% in the number of entities accounted for and 14.6% in GVA. Similarly, between 2013 and 2016 there was an identical positive variation in terms of total job creation and the creation of paid jobs. If we look at a slightly longer interval, we see that between 2010 and 2016, i.e. in just over half a decade, the Portuguese SE increased by 16,502 entities (29.8%), 13.1% in GVA generated and 3.5% in the creation of paid employment. The SE sector does not have in Portugal the weight in the national economy that, for example, it acquires in countries such as France [6.0% of national GVA (2013) and 9.1% of paid employment (2015)] or Belgium [6.1% of national GVA (2014) and 9.0% of paid employment (2015)] (INE / CASES, 2019). Still, with a higher weight in the national economy than sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, textile industry or food industry (2016 data), to name a few examples, this sector becomes an important reality in economic and social terms. In addition, and as will be observed further on, it is a sector that cuts across activities and territories, reflecting in its diversity and amplitude what the Portuguese economy and society represent. But this growth also gives it more responsibility, as regards the contribution to national wealth, the quality of the services and goods produced or the capacity to grow through innovation. Due to its management principles and rules, it is also an example to be followed and scrutinized as an alternative reference in a market space that often tends towards homogeneity.

**Table 1.** SESA main results, with the Portuguese economy (PE) as a reference

	Unit	2010	2013	2016
Number of Units	Nº	55 383	61 268	71 885
	Var. Rate (%)		10.6	17.3
GVA	106 €	4.262,6	4.206,5	4.819,2
	Var. Rate (%)		- 1.3	14.6
	SESA / PE (%)	2.8	2.8	3.0
Employment (FTE)	Nº	228 124	217 744	236 288
	Var. Rate (%)		- 4.6	8.5
	SESA / PE (%)	4.8	5.2	5.3
Employees (FTE)	Nº	226 935	215 963	234 886
	Var. Rate (%)		- 4.8	8,8
	SESA / PE (%)	5.5	6.0	6.1
Average compensation of employees	103 €	17.4	18.4	18.4
	Var. Rate (%)		5.6	0.0
	SESA / PE (%)	83.1	86.4	86.3
GCF	106 €	1.109,7	1.081,8	1.107,8
	Var. Rate (%)		- 2.5	2.4
	SESA / PE (%)	3.2	4.3	3.8

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

An interesting fact in this comparative observation is that, between 2010 and 2016, the sector's evolution was not linear and of positive growth in all the parameters observed. In fact, between 2010 and 2013 the SE continued to grow in the number of units but saw its importance in the national economy decline, both concerning GVA and GFC and in terms of employment. This occurs in an environment of a strong financial and social crisis faced by Portugal, particularly felt between 2011 and 2014, in the course of a process in which the country's government was forced to ask international lenders (Troika: EU Commission, IMF - International Money Found and ECB - European Central Bank) for help to avoid bankruptcy and regain its international credibility. In a context of declining employment, wages and consumption, the national government reacted to the growth of poverty and social exclusion with the decrease of public support and social benefits (Glatzer, 2018; Monteiro, 2019). The decrease in public financing, associated with the investment and consumption crisis, may be an important part of the explanation for the decrease in the economic capacity of the ES sector during this period. Even so,

and in the face of difficulties, the sector has shown resilience and the necessary solidity to continue to generate wealth (2.8% of GVA), to employ more (from 5.5% in 2010 to 6.0% in 2013) and to grow in terms of the relative importance of ES remuneration in total remuneration (from 4.6% in 2010 to 5.2% in 2013). Between 2013 and 2016 the scenario of global growth is resumed, and the ES registers a positive evolution in all parameters measured by SASE.

**Table 2.** Main indicators by activity (2016)

International Classification of Nonprofit and Third Sector Organizations (ICNP/TSO)	Units (nº)	Employment (ETC)	Employees (ETC)	GVA (106 €)
A- Culture, communication, and recreation activities	33 722	12 048	11 789	242
B - Education services	2 594	29 966	29 811	671
C - Human health services	2 386	75 503	75 460	1 186
D - Social services	6 978	70 196	70 000	1 170
E - Environmental protection and animal welfare activities	726	714	702	10
F - Community and economic development, and housing activities	2 106	2 606	2 439	37
G - Civic, advocacy, political and international activities	5 912	2 797	2 769	50
H - Philanthropic Intermediaries and voluntarism promotion	322	190	186	3
I - Religious congregations and associations	8 533	9 802	9 797	175
J - Business, professional, and labor organizations	3 815	8 268	8 128	153
K - Professional, scientific, and administrative services	2 574	5 976	5 775	303
L - Other Activities	2 244	18 222	18 030	821
Social Economy	71 885	236 288	234 886	4 819

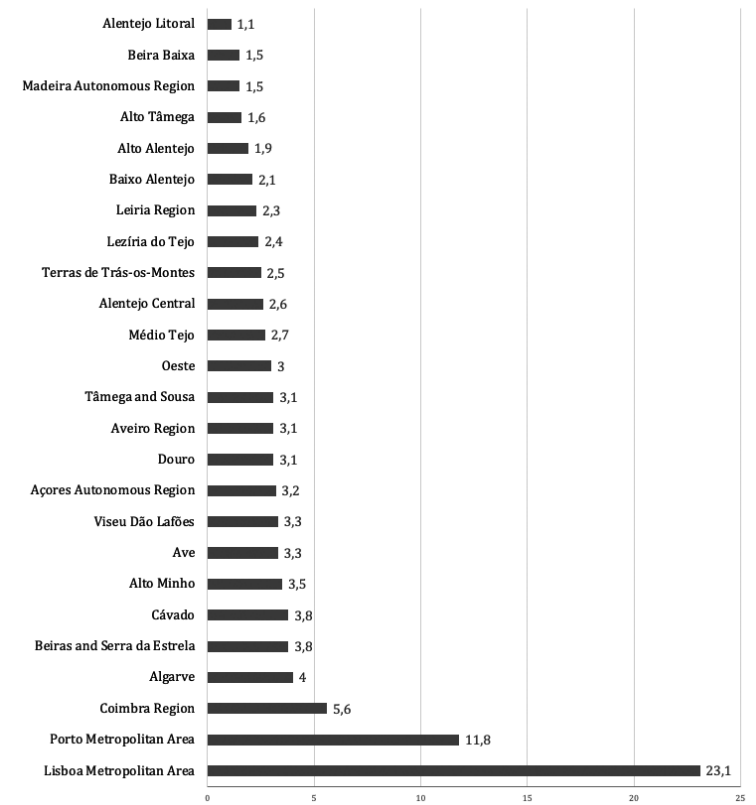
**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

One of the characteristics of SE is its diversified composition and the multiplicity of areas in which it develops its activity. In 2016, Human health services and Social services were the main economic activities, and together they generated approximately 61.9% of paid employment and 48.9% of the SE GVA (Table 2). Although Culture, communication, and recreation activities accounted for almost 50% of the kind of activity units, these accounted for only 5.0% of the SE GVA and of the employees.



The statistical information provided highlights the economic and social transversality of the SE, as its presence is noticeable in almost all economic activities and all social groups are direct or indirect beneficiaries of its activity. On the other hand, an equal territorial transversality is identified, since SE entities are spread all over the country. Being also the most populated, the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto concentrate more than 1/3 of the total number of units (34.9%) (. However, their presence in all municipalities and in most of Portugal's parishes stems from one of the most important characteristics of the Portuguese SE, that a large majority of organizations arise from the initiative and directly serve territorially based human communities, in most cases of infra-municipal scope (Mendes, 2020). At the same time, this territorial affiliation reinforces the importance of SE organizations in promoting local development and protecting and valuing the interests of the communities in which they operate.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of units by NUTS 3 (2016)



**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

The analysis by groups of entities (Table 4) reveals that Associations with Altruistic Goals constitute by far the largest “family” within the SE (92.9% of total), which is reflected in terms of employment and the GVA generated. In turn, Cooperatives were the second group with the highest relative weight in terms of the number of units and GVA, while the Holy Houses of Mercy were the second largest group in terms of paid employment.

**Table 4.** Main indicators by groups of entities (2016)

Social Economy Groups	Units (nº)	Employees (ETC)	GVA (106 €)
Cooperatives	2 343	24 402	604 241
Mutual Associations	97	4 842	387 971
Holy Houses of Mercy	387	39 445	596 630
Foundations	619	14 113	332 321
Associations with Altruistic Goals	66 761	151 779	2 896 871
Community and Self-Management Subsectors	1 678	305	1 174
Social Economy	71 885	234 886	4 819 210

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

The ES “galaxy” is composed of several “constellations”, each with a different weight in the global composition of the sector.

For many, Cooperatives are the group that gave rise to ES, marking its principles and ways of acting. However, they are far from being the most numerous group, at least in Portugal. By 2016, a total of 2,343 cooperatives were considered in SESA, representing 3.3% of the total units. Still, they were the second largest group within SE. In terms of GVA, they contribute 12.5% to the total of the sector and paid employment is equivalent to 10.4%. The main sector of activity of these Cooperatives is Trade activities.

**Table 5.** Cooperatives

	2016
Number of Cooperatives (Nº) .....	2.343
Weight of Cooperatives in SE (%) .....	3.3
Main Activity .....	Trade activities
GVA (106 €) .....	604,2
Employees – FTE (Nº) .....	24 402
Compensation of Employees (106 €) .....	572,2

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

Mutual Associations are few, accounting for 97 in 2016, but represent 8.7% of SE's GVA. This is because this is a group composed of some large associations, mainly in revenues. Concerning employability, this subsector represents 2.1% of total employment. Its main area of activity is Social services, but it is in the financial and insurance services that create the most jobs (74.6% of the total).

**Table 6. Mutual Associations**

	<b>2016</b>
Number of Mutual Associations (Nº) .....	97
Weight of Mutual Associations in SE (%) .....	0.1
Main Activity .....	Social services
GVA (106 €) .....	388,0
Employees – FTE (Nº).....	4 842
Compensation of Employees (106 €).....	212,1

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

The Holy Houses of Mercy group is made up of 387 units, which are spread throughout the country and the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores, the number of which has remained almost unchanged over the past few years. Their contribution to the sector's GVA is almost equivalent to that of Cooperatives, generating 12.4% of the total accounted. In terms of the creation of paid employment, they represent the second most numerous group, with 16.8 of the total employees. Human health services (C) were the most relevant activity of the Holy Houses of Mercy, with 86.1% of total GVA, 87.1% of employees, and 85.8% of compensation of employees.

**Table 7. Holy Houses of Mercy**

	<b>2016</b>
Number of Holy Houses of Mercy (Nº).....	387
Weight of Holy Houses of Mercy in SE (%).....	0.5
Main Activity .....	Human health services
GVA (106 €) .....	596,6
Employees – FTE (Nº).....	39 445
Compensation of Employees (106 €).....	555,3

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

In 2016, the number of Foundations accounted for was 619, representing less than 1.0% of the total number of SE organizations. As a whole, they represent 6.9% of the GVA structure and 6.0% of total employees. Almost 30% of Foundations developed activity in Social services (D). But Education services (B), although comprising only 8.6% of Foundations, were the most relevant activity in terms of GVA (27.8%) and compensation of employees (28.1%). In terms of employees, the most important activity was Human health services (C) (32.4% of the Foundations total).

**Table 8. Foundations**

	<b>2016</b>
Number of Foundations (Nº) .....	619
Weight of Foundations in SE (%) .....	0.9
Main Activity .....	Social services
GVA (106 €) .....	332,3
Employees – FTE (Nº).....	14 113
Compensation of Employees (106 €).....	304,3

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

Associations with Altruistic Goals is by far the largest group within the galaxy of SE entities, comprising 66,761 units, or 92.9% of its total. This majority expression is also manifested at the level of its weight in the sector's GVA, generating 60.1% of the total, and in terms of employees, with 64.6%. Its dominant activity is Culture, communication, and recreation activities, which prevail in almost 50% of the entities. But they only represent 5.9% of this GVA group. Regarding GVA, the most relevant activities were Social services (D), with 34.5%. Social services (D) were more relevant in terms of employees (38.0% of the sector) and of compensation of employees (34.4%).

**Table 9. Associations with Altruistic Goals**

	<b>2016</b>
Number of Assoc. with Altruistic Goals (Nº).....	66 761
Weight of Assoc. with Altruistic Goals in SE (%).....	92.9
Main Activity .....	Culture, communication, and recreation activities
GVA (106 €) .....	2 896,9
Employees – FTE (Nº).....	151 799
Compensation of Employees (106 €).....	2 673,9

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

As already mentioned, the IPSS status is a particularity in the Portuguese legal system, which is granted by nature and definition to Mutual Societies and Holy Houses of Mercy but can also be attributed to Cooperatives, Foundations, and Social Solidarity Associations that require it. Due to its economic importance and social relevance, INE - Statistics Portugal has decided to autonomise its measurement in the context of SESA. In the 2016 SESA universe, there were 5,622 entities with the IPSS (Private Institution of Social Solidarity) status (around 7.8% of the total), the majority of which were Associations with Altruistic Goals (84.0%), followed by Holy Houses of Mercy (6.9%), Foundations (4.6%), Cooperatives (2.8%) and Mutual Associations (1.7%). The importance of the IPSS is demonstrated by what these entities represent in terms of GVA (44.2% of the SE), the number of employees (63.1%), and the compensation of employees (51.5%). The dominant activity was Human health services (D), developed by 39.3% of IPSS.

**Table 10.** Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS)

	<b>2016</b>
Number of IPSS (Nº).....	5 622
Weight of IPSS in SE (%).....	7.8
Main Activity .....	Social Services
GVA (106 €) .....	2 128,6
Employees – FTE (Nº).....	---
Compensation of Employees (106 €).....	2 227,7

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

The last group to be mentioned includes the entities that make up the Community and Self-Management Subsectors (CSMS). We are not facing the less numerous group of entities, with 1,678 units. But this sub-sector has a residual weight in terms of the GVA generated (1.2 million euros, or 0.02%), in the same way that it employs only 305 employees (FTE).

**Table 11. Community and Self-Management Subsectors (CSMS)**

	<b>2016</b>
Number of CSMS (Nº) .....	1678
Weight of CSMS in SE (%) .....	2.3
Main Activity .....	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
GVA (106 €) .....	1,2
Employees – FTE (Nº) .....	305
Compensation of Employees (106 €) .....	3,8

**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

If we consider the division of the SE into two subsectors, the mercantile (which basically encompasses Cooperatives and Mutual Societies) and the non-mercantile (which generically includes Associations with Altruistic Purposes, Foundations and Holy Houses of Mercy) (EESC / CIRIEC-International, 2017; Ferreira, 2019), we verify that the latter has a greater weighting in the sector both in terms of the number of units and the contribution to the GVA of the SE (71.6% of the total). It should also be noted that this characteristic has been strengthened over recent years, visible in the growth in the number of entities and their contribution to the GVA of the SE, in comparison to the mercantile subsector (Table 12). Specifically, the Mutual Associations group has been experiencing a steady decrease in size, with a contraction of 18.4% between 2010 and 2016. In the case of the Cooperatives, the trend is inconstant with regard to the evolution in the number of entities formed and extinguished. According to a recently published report (CASES, 2020), 2011, at the peak of the economic and financial crisis, was the year in which the highest number of extinct Cooperatives (171) as opposed to new Cooperatives formed (36) were reached in the last decade. The same trend was seen in 2012 and 2013 (a negative balance of 44 units in each year), which suggests that, in the SE sector, the cooperative branch was one of the groups that faced the greatest difficulties in the face of on-going crisis. Subsequent years have been of relative balance between established and extinct entities. On the contrary, the greatest growth has occurred in the group of Associations with Altruistic Goals, which in the 2010-2016 interval registered an increase of over 28%.

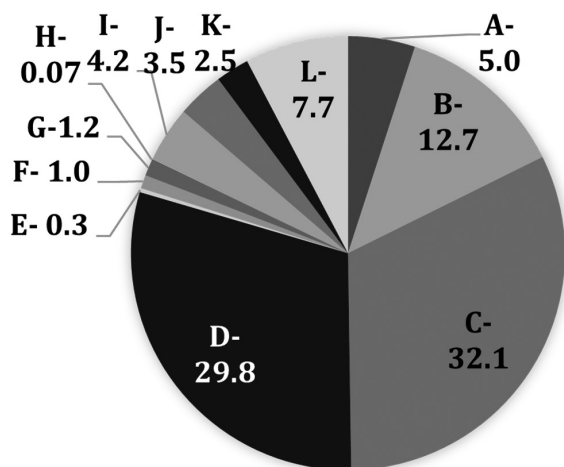
**Table 12.** Evolution in the number of entities, by SE Groups

Social Economy Groups		2010	2013	2016
Cooperatives	Nº of units	2 260	2 117	2 343
	Var. Rate (%)		- 6.3	10.7 (3.7)
Mutual Associations	Nº of units	119	111	97
	Var. Rate (%)		- 6.7	- 12.6 (- 18.4)
Holy Houses of Mercy	Nº of units	381	389	387
	Var. Rate (%)		2.1	- 0.5 (1.6)
Foundations	Nº of units	537	587	619
	Var. Rate (%)		9.3	5.4 (15.3)
Associations with Altruistic Goals	Nº of units	52 086	57 196	66 761
	Var. Rate (%)		9.8	16.7 (28.2)
Community and Self-Management Subsectors	Nº of units	---	877	1 678
	Var. Rate (%)			91.3 (--)
Number of Units	Nº of units	55 383	61 268	71 885
	Var. Rate (%)		10.6	17.3 (29.8)

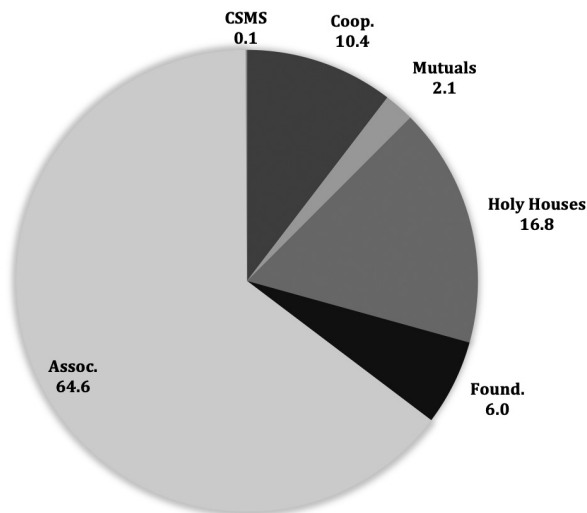
**Source:** INE / CASES, 2013; 2016; 2019.

This trend is not strange to the fact that in recent years the role of the non-market subsector has been growing, both in terms of pursuing services of general interest, in partnership with central and local public administration, and also as a State partner in the definition of public policies, namely in the social services domain (Antunes, 2019). If this reality transforms the SE into an increasingly relevant player in the framework of the consolidation of the “Welfare State”, it is also true that it raises some pertinent questions, namely regarding the guarantee of the principle of a “management that is autonomous and independent from public authorities” (Article 5 of the LBES). And, subsequently, the challenges of governance and self-regulation, given the risk of instrumentalisation by the State.

The importance of the SE is measured not only by the activities it performs and the production of wealth, but also by the jobs it creates. This last dimension combines economic and social factors. In the case of SE entities, particular attention is paid to how they create jobs in territories with fewer opportunities and/or for minorities and disadvantaged social groups.

**Figure 2.** SE employees by activity (%)

Source: INE / CASES, 2019.

**Figure 3.** SE employees by group of entities (%)

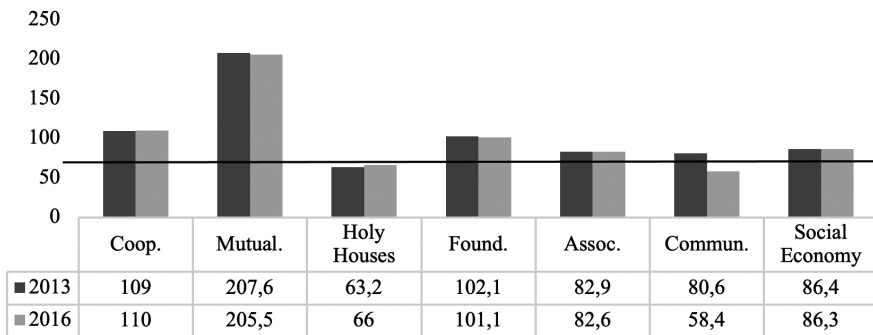
Source: INE / CASES, 2019.



Regarding job creation, in 2016, 32.1% of paid employment (FTE) in SE was concentrated in Human health services (C), and the entities linked to Social services absorbed 29.8% of paid employment. Analyzing by groups of entities, it was the Associations that employed the most within SE (64.6%), followed by the Holy Houses of Mercy (16.8%) and the Cooperatives (10.4%).

Overall, the average remuneration in ES (by FTE) was lower than that of the national economy (86.3%), showing a significant dispersion among groups of entities. The Mutual Associations were the SE group with the highest average compensation of employees, followed by the Cooperatives and the Foundations, both with higher average compensation than the total economy. At the other extreme were the Community and Self-Management Subsectors entities, with the lowest average compensation of employees.

**Figure 4.** Compensation of Employees (FTE), by SE groups of entities



**Source:** INE / CASES, 2019.

Still in terms of employability and human resources management, we believe it pertinent to add two pieces of information from other sources. On the other hand, as pointed out in the study by Paiva, Pinto, Monteiro & Augusto (2015) on employability in the SE in Portugal, the observation that a significant part of these organizations, faced with budgetary and human resource shortages, opt to fill the jobs through recourse to subsidized employment (employment-insertion contracts) and temporary employment. This is a reality that is verified above all in organizations of small dimension, justified by the fact that these forms of contracting enable solutions that otherwise would not be within their reach. As a second note, the one that which results from a Survey on the Social Economy Sector conducted in 2018 and addressed to members of the entities' top management (INE / CASES, 2020). This survey, which analyses, among other aspects, the composition of the governing bodies of these entities, reveals that the presence of men in the management bodies is always above 70%, oscillating between 70.2% in Associations with altruistic purposes and 79.3% in Mutualist Associations. With regard to the top management position, the imbalance is even more flagrant. From 73,7% in the Founda-

tions to 93,3% in the Mutualist Associations, passing through 78,0% in the Associations with Altruistic Purposes, 80,9% in the Cooperatives and 87% in the Holy Houses of Mercy, none of the Portuguese SE families diverge from the tendency towards gender segregation in the filling of the top, and power, positions in the entities.

Overall, the data provided by SESA together with the study on employability in the sector and the findings on the presence of women in management bodies, reveal that in the field of job creation and management, SE organizations face major challenges in complying with the principles by which they claim to guide their activity. More specifically, to respect internally the primacy of people and social objectives over capital, in a context where the rules of the competitive market tend to be progressively imposed.

## 5. Concluding remarks

The SE sector is increasingly revealing its importance both economically and socially, particularly within the European Union (Bassi & Fabbri, 2020). According to the data published in the report "Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union" (EESC / CIRIEC-International, 2017), the European SE would consist of more than 2.8 million entities and enterprises, corresponding to over 13.6 million paid jobs or the equivalent to about 6.3% of the working population of the EU-28, would employ a workforce of over 1.9 million, including paid and non-paid, would benefit from the contribution of more than 82.8 million volunteers, and had more than 232 million members of Cooperatives, Mutuals and similar entities.

The above portrait, although approximate and subject to many gaps in terms of national and sectoral statistical data, allows us today a much more objective observation of the SE where, until recently, subjective perceptions and evaluations based on personal experience stood out. To provide objective, up-to-date and comparable statistical information, more and more countries are investing in the production of information sources based on instruments whose reliability has gradually been tested and refined, such as National Accounts (NA) and complementary Satellite Accounts. Besides, there is a concern to conceptualize and strictly delimit the sector, namely through legal means. Portugal is one of the countries that has been committed to this effort. From 2013 onwards the country has a specific law, the Social Economy Framework Law. And in this same Law, it was determined the obligation to create and update a satellite account for the SE, developed within the scope of the national statistical system. To date, three editions of SASE have been published, in 2013, 2016, and 2019.

Throughout this text, we have first analyzed how in Portugal the concept of SE has been defined and delimited, particularly by legal means. The difficulties in establishing clear and unquestionable boundaries are highlighted, as well as the concept being observed from the diversity that composes it (guiding principles and groups of entities).

Subsequently, a quantitative representation of the Portuguese SE is presented, with the most recent data available in 2019 and for 2016 as a source. The scenario presented is that of a growing sector, with a weight in the Portuguese economy corresponding to 3.0% of the na-

tional GVA, exceeding 230 thousand jobs created, equivalent to 5.3% of total employment and 6.1% of paid employment. More than 71 thousand entities were identified within the scope of the Social Economy Satellite Account (SESA), distributed through a wide set of activities, among which Culture, communication, and recreation activities (46.9%) stood out, followed by Religious congregations and associations (11.9%). In turn, Human health services and Social Services were most relevant in terms of GVA, total employment, and paid employment. By groups of entities, Associations with Altruistic Goals were the most relevant group regarding the number of entities (92.9%), GVA (60.1%), and paid employment (64, 6%).

By making use of the Social Economy Satellite Account (SASE) to draw this portrait, we are expecting to be providing conceptually structured statistical information, with a form and content that may facilitate its use in the context of broader studies, both diachronic analysis as well as international comparisons.

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