

## Entidades de economía social para apoyar la pesca a pequeña escala desde la perspectiva de los fondos Next Generation: algunos casos de éxito

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**Resumen.** El año 2022 es el Año Internacional de la Pesca y la Acuicultura Artesanales. La elección de este momento pretende proporcionar un hito importante para evaluar el progreso hacia la meta de “apoyar la pesca a pequeña escala” y compartir buenas prácticas en todo el mundo. Sin embargo, la medición de esta meta puede resultar francamente difícil, por lo que conviene comenzar por reconocer la indudable importancia de este tipo de pesca y seleccionar los interlocutores válidos en la materia de cara a poder implementar un plan de acción válido. El momento resulta coincidente con las convocatorias en diversos países de la UE con cargo a Fondos Next Generation, que pueden contribuir a la modernización y transformación del sector, por lo que se analizan los PERTE más adecuados para el caso de España.

Entre las buenas prácticas en Planificación Marina para el fomento de la pesca a pequeña escala, queremos destacar las derivadas de la aportación de entidades de Economía Social (ES), ya que pueden convertirse auténticamente en su eje central, ya que las entidades de ES han demostrado ser una forma exitosa de lograr diferentes objetivos relacionados con la creación de empleo, la reducción de la desigualdad, la promoción de la inversión local o la protección social y ambiental responsable en lo que respecta al apoyo a la pesca artesanal y a pequeña escala.

Así, el propósito de este trabajo es precisamente compartir los casos de éxito de diferentes tipos de entidades de la ES en el caso de España (cofradías de pescadores, fundaciones, asociaciones y cooperativas) en la implementación de este último objetivo. Potenciar la pesca artesanal sostenible y a pequeña escala (SSF, por sus siglas en inglés) a través de políticas públicas hacia las entidades de ES puede ser fundamental para su logro. Además, en el contexto de los Fondos Next Generation, las diferentes formas de colaboración con este tipo de entes son un valioso punto de partida para proyectos de éxito.

**Palabras clave:** Pesca a pequeña escala; Economía social; Cofradías de pescadores; ODS14; Fondos Next Generation.

**Claves Econlit:** B55; M20; M53; O35.

### [en] Social Economy entities to support small-scale fishing: some important success cases in the context of Next Generation Funds

**Abstract.** The year 2022 is the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture. The choice of this moment is intended to provide an important milestone for assessing progress towards the goal of “supporting small-scale fisheries” and to share good practices worldwide. However, it can be difficult to measure this goal, so it is necessary to begin by recognising the undoubted importance of this type of fishing and selecting the appropriate interlocutors to implement a valid plan of action. The timing of the Next Generation Funding for transformation to help implement an action plan is also important.

Among the good practices in Marine Planning for the promotion of Small-Scale Fishing (SSF), we wish to highlight those derived from the contribution of Social Economy (SE) entities as they have the potential to form its central axis. SE entities are key as they have proven to be a successful method of achieving different objectives related to job creation, inequality reduction, promotion of local investment and social protection, and they are environmentally responsible with regard to support for artisanal and small-scale fishing.

Thus, the purpose of this work is to share the success stories of different types of SE entities in the case of Spain (fishermen's associations, foundations, associations and cooperatives) in the implementation of the latter objective above. Promoting sustainable and small-scale artisanal fishing via public policies for SE entities is essential to achieving such aims. Moreover, in the context of Next Generation Projects, collaboration with this kind of entity is extremely beneficial for a project's success.

**Keywords:** Small-Scale Fishing (SSF); Social Economy (SE); Fishermen guilds; Next Generation Funds.

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**Summary.** 1. What exactly is Small-Scale Fishing?. 2. The promotion of Social Economy as a means to help Small-Scale Fishing. 3. Are there other SE entities that could benefit from public policies in the context of SSF?. 4. SE entities in the context of SSF in Spain: the key to accessing Next Generation Funds. 5. Conclusions. 6. References.

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## 1. What exactly is Small-Scale Fishing?

Crona, Pomeroy and Purcel observe that: “*Small-scale fisheries (SSFs) make important but often poorly quantified contributions to national and regional economies, to local food security and nutrition of millions of people*”<sup>4</sup>. This is only one of the problems faced by SSF: even though its importance and contribution to the nutrition of millions of people is an undisputed fact, this contribution is neither understood nor acknowledged. In addition, there are several other problems: competition with large scale fishing with very different means, overexploitation, surpassing the threshold, etc. However, for the purpose of this paper we only focus on the issue of governance to promote SSF.

To begin, there is no generally accepted definition (even by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations [FAO]) for what SSFs are. Typically, we tend to consider them family-based businesses, where owners are directly involved in the fishing activity. What is undoubtable is that, together with other maritime activities, SSFs play a key role not only for these families’ subsistence but also for local economies as they are also the main source of fish protein for human consumption<sup>5</sup>.

This does not mean that there have been no attempts to define SSF. On the contrary, several authors have offered definitions, yet surprisingly, there is currently no approved one at the FAO or even EU level.

Even though numerous articles have delved into how national fisheries policies define SSF to date, no studies have systematically and empirically examined how the definition of SSF has been articulated in science, including whether and how definitions have changed over time. Therefore, SSFs have to be promoted as they constitute a UN goal, at different levels and by different instances, despite lacking prior definition. This means that, depending on where fishers operate, they can be considered as SSF or not. This may pose a serious problem as in order to promote the concept, we first need to know exactly what it is.

As Smith and Basurto are the authors who have attempted to rationalise the situation by systematically analysing how SSF have been defined in the peer-reviewed scientific literature, drawing on a database to do so, we refer to their work here. The authors found that nearly one-quarter of the scientific literature did not define SSF<sup>6</sup>.

What were the main characteristics among those that did try to define SSF? According to Smith and Basurto, harvest technologies such as fishing boats and gear were the most common characteristics used. Comparing definitions over time, Smith and Basurto identified two different trends: “*a decreasing proportion of articles that defined SSF and an increasing reliance on technological dimensions like boats relative to sociocultural characteristics. Our results resonate with findings from similar research on the definition of SSF in national fisheries policies that also heavily rely on boat length*”.

For instance, as noted by Carvalho, Edwards-Jones and Isidro<sup>7</sup>, special attention is paid to the size of the boat to identify small-scale and large-scale fishing in several EU Mediterranean countries: “*the Azorean small-scale fishing sector is comprised by all vessels up to 12 m in length, and still dominated by small, old, wooden vessels of low power, similar to other Mediterranean or less developed European fishing fleets, such as in Greece, Estonia and Corsica... Small-scale fisheries employ more people, land slightly more catch and achieve a higher landed value per tonne than their larger counterparts*”. They also indicate an important feature that makes them worthy of promotion as “*they are also less fuel intensive and appear to be less harmful to stocks and their habitats*”.

<sup>4</sup> See Crona, B.I., Pomeroy, R.S., and Purcell S.W., “Small-scale and artisanal fisheries: insights and approaches for improved governance and management in a globalized context”, *Frontiers in Marine Science*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2020.00455>, 30-6-2020, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, H and Basurto, X., “Defining Small-Scale Fisheries and Examining the Role of Science in Shaping Perceptions of Who and What Counts: A Systematic Review”, *Marine fisheries, Aquaculture and Living Resources*, may 2019, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00236> state the following: “*For many the term “small-scale fishery” (SSF) evokes a mental image of small, traditional fishing craft equipped with low-tech gear requiring labor-intensive fishing methods. Fishermen are typically the central subjects of this platonic scene, operating boats individually or in small-crews in the pursuit of fish. Even individual fishing strategies are often presumed to follow one of several archetypal models of behavior, whether inherently ecologically and socially harmonious, and therefore sustainable, or conforming to the economically rational, competitive fisher of fisheries bioeconomic models (St. Martin, 2005). This dominant imaginary of SSF is often spatialized, presumably limited to the tropical seas of the Third World, as opposed to the fully capitalist, industrial fisheries that inhabit the First World (St. Martin, 2005).*”

<sup>6</sup> Smith, H and Basurto, X., “Defining Small-Scale Fisheries and Examining the Role of Science in Shaping Perceptions of Who and What Counts: A Systematic Review”, op.cit.p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Carvalho, N., Edwards-Jones, G., Isidro, E., “Defining scale in fisheries: Small versus large-scale fishing operations in the Azores”, *Fisheries Research*, n109, pp. 2-3, 2011,doi:10.1016/j.fishres.2011.03.006.

Carvalho, Edwards- Jones and Isidro further describe the co-existence of both small and large-scale fishing in different countries<sup>8</sup>. However, this co-existence is not without friction as SSF and large-scale ones have to compete over more difficult and limited resources with very different means.

Chuenpagdee adds that “*the majority of the world’s fisheries comprise small-scale, multi-species, multi-gear, commercial fishing vessels, operating in all bodies of water (inland, brackish and marine), both near urban centres and in remote areas. Their operation involves family members, in pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest parts of the fish chain. Women and children often participate in the fisheries. Small-scale fisheries catches are landed relatively close to where fishing occurs and are distributed through various channels. A certain portion is generally sold to local markets or to intermediaries by family members and some remains for household consumption*”<sup>9</sup>.

An important matter not explored further here is the amount of disturbance SSF can absorb and what the systems might look like if a threshold is crossed<sup>10</sup>. Large scale fishing may be causing a serious risk to SSF subsistence as it is more harmful to stocks and make SSFs go further in the sea to seek stock. As Blythe concludes, “*Fishers with strong attachment to occupation would respond by migrating permanently to new fishing grounds, whereas fishers with strong attachment to place would respond by changing their professions while remaining in their community*”<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, it should be noted that the terminology may mislead us as SSF is not at all “small” in importance. On the contrary, SSF has, in fact, a huge impact not only on the number of fish catches for human consumption but also on the number of fish workers jobs involved.

As the FAO Voluntary Guidelines state, SSFs contribute to approximately half of global fish catches. When considering catches destined for direct human consumption, the share contributed by the SSFs increases to two-thirds<sup>12</sup>.

Inland fisheries are particularly important in this respect, whereby the majority of the catches from SSFs are directed to human consumption. In addition, SSF is responsible for the jobs of approximately 90% of the world’s capture fishers and fish workers.

Regarding the EU, the situation is similar; SSFs also play a crucial role as they represent approximately 80% of the EU fishing fleet and half of the total EU fleet effort. This is particularly important in Mediterranean countries, where over half of the sector is concentrated and where SSF has been playing a dominant role in the livelihoods of coastal communities for centuries now. Therefore, we concentrate here on the case of Spain.

As stated in the Spanish Plan for Transformation, Recovery and Resilience (PERTE) for the agri-food industry, fishing is an activity with a long tradition in Spain, and continues to be of decisive importance due to its role as a source of high-quality and essential food, the ability to set the population in coastal areas and its impact as a booster of the economy in these areas and in the rest of the national territory. Spain has the first fleet of the European Union, to date. As of 31 December, 2020, it had a total of 8,839 vessels, capturing in said year approximately 790,000 tons of fish, with a total market catch value of €1,733.4 million. The Spanish fishing and aquaculture sector generates an approximate average of 31,100 jobs, a figure that doubles when including employees in the industry of transformation and conservation of products of the fishing. To this figure, we should add the indirect jobs generated by fishing activity in ports, transport and provisioning companies for ship operations.

## 1.1. Commonalities between Small Scale Fishing and Social Economy

For the purpose of this paper, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for securing Sustainable SSF (hereafter the FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines) is the reference text as we consider it the first internationally agreed instrument as regards SSF in the context of poverty eradication and food security. It should be noted, however, that there is an FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (dating from 1995) that can be considered a complementary text; not only for SSF but for many other purposes.

Although the aforesaid Guidelines are voluntary, as their name indicates they nonetheless represent the consensus of over 4000 fishers, fish workers and others in over 120 countries following a bottom-up participatory process. These people, dependent on fish, have described within the guidelines how they wish to make livelihoods along the SSFs value chain sustainable for people and the planet. Thus, their own recommendations were summarised into a concise set of principles by FAO in 2015. This document requires

<sup>8</sup> Carvalho, N., Edwards-Jones, G., Isidro, E., “Defining scale in fisheries: Small versus large-scale” *op.cit.*, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Chuenpagdee, r.p.; Jentoft, S. *Transdisciplinarity for Small-Scale Fisheries Governance Analysis and Practice*; Springer Nature: Cham, Switzerland, 2019; ISBN 978-3-319-94938-3, p.16.

<sup>10</sup> For this purpose, see Blythe, J.L., “Resilience and social thresholds in small-scale fishing communities”, *Sustain Sci* 10, 157–165 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-014-0253-9>, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> Blythe, J.L., “Resilience and social thresholds in small-scale fishing communities”, *op.cit.* p.4.

<sup>12</sup> FAO, (2015), *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*, available at: <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en/>.

a strong commitment from both governments and civil society to bring about real change regarding SSF, being global in scope.

Some data regarding SSFs should be remembered: they provide livelihoods for millions of people and essential nutrition to billions, and contribute substantially to household, local and national economies, economic growth, and coastal communities' cultural identity and social structures.

It is also important to highlight that these guidelines mostly address the rights of fishers and fish workers, so they are concerned with the people that depend on the fish, not just the fish themselves. Of course, fish are important as they represent the main source of protein for these communities and fishermen would not exist as such without them. However, fish will not be our primary concern, although it is precisely the need to ensure a population of fish that is most instrumental for this purpose.

It should also be remembered that their traditional ecological systems are at risk as they are continuously challenged by overfishing (particularly by large scale fishing) and other very important stressors arising, among others, from climate change<sup>13</sup>.

According to the FAO document "The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020", SSFs provide at least 40% of global fish catches and employ more than 90% of people working in fisheries value chains (about half of them are women, who are mainly engaged in marketing and processing), with an estimated 97% of fishers living in developing countries, and with many SSF communities experiencing high levels of poverty.

Indicator 14.b.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) measures the "access rights" aspect of target 14.b on the basis of countries' efforts to implement selected key provisions of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication<sup>14</sup>. FAO and other agencies have supported States in implementing the Guidelines as a global, participatory multi-stakeholder framework complementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, to support the development of SSF communities through a human rights-based approach. Some of the essential tools for target 14.b are: capacity development of fishers and fish workers, including women engaged in post-harvest activities; participatory decision-making; technical assistance; dissemination of information regarding market access requirements and markets; recognition of SSFs' tenure systems and access rights; fisheries resource management support; insurance; safety at sea training; and an enabling and participatory SSFs legal, regulatory and policy framework.

As Crona, Pomeroy and Purcell generally observe: "*small-scale and artisanal fishers suffer from poorly defined rights to marine resources, which can negatively affect conservation incentives. They are often (but not always) among the poorest and most marginalized parts of society and are generally poorly represented in national and international policy fora. However, poorly defined access rights are only part of a complex puzzle of diverse fishing practices and often weak governance structures to regulate them*"<sup>15</sup>.

However, once the guidelines have been approved, an action plan needs to be taken to implement them. This particular target has not been examined in relation to SE and it may be interesting to do so as there are many commonalities when SSF and SE entities are compared. SE entities may be an important tool to help SSF governance.

As stated in the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines, SSF constitutes a deeply rooted sector in local communities, which shares a common aspect with SE entities as they are also generally interdependent on their communities. Another important aspect of SSF that needs to be highlighted is the importance of both human rights and vulnerable and marginalised groups, a trait also shared by SE entities who aim to redistribute wealth. Again, the creation of proper jobs is also important in both cases. As described by Monzon and Chaves, 2012, Calderón and Calderón 2012, 2017, Juliá et al., 2022, Santero-Sánchez and Castro Núñez 2022, SE entities have a long history of creating comparatively better and more stable jobs than other sorts of entities<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> As studied by Beddington JR, Agnew DJ, Clark CW (2007) "Current problems in the management of marine fisheries", *Science* 316:1713–1716. doi:10.1126/science.137362; Worm B, Hilbourn R, Baum JK, Branch TA, Collie JS, Costello C. (2009) "Rebuilding global fisheries. *Science*" 325:578–585. doi:10.1126/science.1173146.

<sup>14</sup> See FAO inputs in relation to A/RES/75/239 concerning "oceans and the law of the sea" for the report of the Secretary-General to the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly", 14 June 2021; Also FAO, "Sustainable Development Goals indicators", 2021, available at [www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14b1/en/](http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14b1/en/); and UNCTAD, Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies. This indicator is assessed every two years on the basis of responses provided by Governments to a questionnaire on: laws, regulations, policies, plans or strategies that specifically target or address the SSF sector; any ongoing specific initiatives to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication; and the existence of mechanisms through which SSFs fishers and fish workers contribute to decision-making processes. Target 14.b and its indicator should equally guide action concerning small-scale inland fisheries. FAO assists Governments and other partners to better understand and report on target 14.b

<sup>15</sup> Crona, B.I., Pomeroy, R.S., and Purcell S.W., "Small-scale and artisanal fisheries.", op.cit, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> See Calderón, B. y Calderón, M.J. (2012) La calidad del empleo de las entidades de la economía social en periodo de crisis, *Ekonomiaz*, 79, pp. 30-57; Cancelo, M., Vázquez, E. & Díaz-Vázquez, M.R. (2022) Impacto de la crisis de la covid-19 en el empleo de las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en España en el año 2020: un análisis shift-share sectorial, *CIRIEC-España, Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa*, N° 104, pp. 35-64. DOI: 10.7203/CIRIEC-E.104.21702; Juliá, J.F., Bernal, E. & Carrasco, I. (2022) Economía Social y recuperación económica tras la crisis del COVID-19, *CIRIEC-España, Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa*, N° 104, pp. 7-33. DOI: 10.7203/CIRIEC-

Furthermore, Sustainable Social and Economic Development for the benefit of current and future generations is promoted in the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines, which can be regarded as another common link with SE.

As described in the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines, many SSF workers are self-employed and engaged in directly providing food for their household and communities. Therefore, they can be said to be "subsistence" fishers, meaning they do not fully realise their potential and, due to the fish capture shortage, they may be at risk. This may be because of the drastic decline in fish – fishing is becoming increasingly difficult, meaning that fishermen must go farther out in the sea to catch it.

Another important external factor that hinders fishing is the flourishing of tourism in some areas. Together with the adverse effects of tourism in coastal communities (among other impacts), it is increasingly difficult for these fishermen to cater for themselves and their families. Therefore, there is a real and urgent necessity to implement the guidelines and promote better SSF governance.

Thus, as we have seen, at a time of overexploitation of resources and threats to habitats and ecosystems, the promotion of SSF presents numerous challenges. Their co-management in SE entities needs to urgently replace non-participatory and often centralised fisheries management systems. SE entities have already proved to be trustworthy in the creation of democratic, equitable and stable jobs<sup>17</sup>. As shown by, among others, Sala Ríos, they have even proved to demonstrate a countercyclical behaviour, which is crucial during crises periods<sup>18</sup>.

## 2. The promotion of Social Economy as a means to help Small-Scale Fishing

In 2015, the UN issued an opinion whereby SE entities are believed to be essential agents to carry out environmental and business sustainability plans. As stated by different authors such Mendoza Jiménez et al., "*In the proximity ecosystems, sustainability plays an even more important role in development, and it is there where the social economy entities occupy a privileged place*<sup>19</sup>".

UN resolution 74/135 of 18 December 2019, entitled "Rights of indigenous peoples", highlights the important contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Thus, the crucial role local communities, in different forms and most particularly in SE forms, play for the sustainable use of the sea is acknowledged.

Following Chaves and Monzón's definition, SE entities are conceived as "*organizations with explicit social or environmental objectives guided by principles and practices of cooperation, solidarity, ethics and democratic self-management*<sup>20</sup>".

Fishermen's guilds and fishermen cooperatives are a sector that tends to be firmly rooted in local communities too, with their traditions and values coinciding both with those of the SE and the 2030 Agenda. It is always better and easier both for fishermen themselves and for their community to be organised as such. Thus, SE entities can be an important asset to "*provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*".

It is precisely in contexts of dire need in which, traditionally, SE entities tend to flourish. This has been demonstrated throughout the last few centuries and in the aftermath of different crises, such as that which began in 2008. The reason for this is that SE entities, such as fishermen's guilds, associations or cooperatives, have recurrently had a leading role in promoting structural and long-term reform in times of need for various reasons. Thus, SE entities have extensive experience in providing innovative responses to economic and social needs in addition to a solid structure based on values and principles.

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E.104.21734; Monzón, J. y Chaves, R. (2012) La economía social en la Unión Europea. Informe publicado por el Comité Económico y Social Europeo, UE. DOI: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2864/19566>. Monzón, J. y Chaves, R. (2017) Evolución reciente de la economía social en la Unión Europea. Informe publicado por el Comité Económico y Social Europeo, UE. Descargado el 15 de mayo de 2021 de: [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/qe-04-17-876-es-n\\_0.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/qe-04-17-876-es-n_0.pdf); Santero Sánchez, R. and Castro Núñez, R.B., "Calidad del empleo creado en las cooperativas y sociedades laborales en la recuperación económica 2013-2016. Análisis del caso de España", *REVESCO, Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, vol.142, e83723, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/REVE.83723>.

<sup>17</sup> See Sala-Ríos, M. (2022) Performance of spanish cooperatives: from the Great Recession to the COVID-19 pandemic. *REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, vol. 142, e84391. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/reve.84391>.

<sup>18</sup> See Sala Ríos, M., "Análisis del comportamiento", op.cit., p. 3: "Another key issue is the relationship between cooperatives and the business cycle. A large number of studies recognise that cooperatives have a counter-cyclical behaviour, making them a defensive tool against downturn periods and exerting a refuge effect (Birchall and Ketilson, 2009; Boone, Christophe; Özcan, 2014; Calderón and Calderón, 2012b; Carini and Carpita, 2014; Cornforth and Thomas, 1995; Demoustier, 2000; Grávalos and Pomares, 2001a; Monzón, 2012; Roelants et al., 2012; Román, 2014)".

<sup>19</sup> Mendoza Jiménez, J., Guzmán Pérez B., Pérez Monteverde, M.V and Román Cervantes, C. (2020) The Contribution of the Fishermen's Guilds and the Agrarian Transformation Societies to the Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of the Canary Islands, *Sustainability*, 12, p.15. DOI: 10.3390/su12145635.

<sup>20</sup> Chaves Avila, R., and Monzón Campos, J.L. (2018) La economía social ante los paradigmas económicos emergentes: Innovación social, economía colaborativa, economía circular, responsabilidad social empresarial, economía del bien común, empresa social y economía solidaria, *Revista del CIRIEC-España Economía Pública Social y Cooperativa*, nº 93, p. 68.

During the Great Crisis, these entities proved to be far more resilient than other types of traditional enterprises. Thus, SE entities are of great importance for improving the living and working conditions of people in SSF as well as making essential infrastructure and services available even or mostly in areas neglected by the State and investor-driven enterprises<sup>21</sup>.

For instance, values at the heart of the SE movement are central to creating decent jobs. They also play an increasingly important role in balancing economic, social and environmental concerns as well as contributing to poverty prevention and reduction. Therefore, cooperation brings fresh air to inspire small-scale and artisanal fishing.

Whenever fishermen/women join forces, constituting an SE entity, they can better achieve their goals and fully realise their potential, improving not only their socioeconomic situation but also that of their communities.

Prioritising people and work before capital allow these entities to fulfil social, economic and political goals leading to sustainable growth. For this purpose, SE entities, devoted to fishing and all its possible related activities, can provide jobs in commercial fishing, processing and marketing, contributing to social and economic cohesion and community economic development. Thus, they can contribute to a more sustainable future, helping to achieve some of the targets of support of SSFs.

SE entities typically use traditional knowledge, which can be a powerful conservation tool, providing community support for conservation plans and enabling the inclusion of customary ecological management practices in their design. They are the people most interested in sustainability to ensure their means of subsistence. Due to this traditional knowledge and these people's experiences, marine spatial planning can be greatly improved as regards SSF.

Moreover, considering the opportunity represented by the extraordinary funding of the Next Generation Project calls, SE entities can be an asset to cooperatively present transformation projects. As we examine below, these sort of entities are already leading important projects in the context of SSF sustainability.

Within SE, there are very different entities that can serve this purpose; not only cooperatives but also fishermen guilds, associations and foundations can be of use. In the following, we give several examples of what they are together with some successful projects they have developed in the context of SSF.

Particular attention is given to these sorts of entities in light of the Next Generation Projects as collaboration among public, public and third sector entities is sought in these types of calls<sup>22</sup>. SE entities are comprised within this third sector; they are usually small- and medium-sized entities and in the different calls they can play a crucial role for successful projects.

Thus, The Spanish Recovery Plan, funded with European Next Generation Funds, incorporates an important investment and reform structural agenda, which is interrelated and feeds back to achieve four transversal objectives: to move towards a greener, more digital Spain; to ensure more cohesion from the social and territorial perspective; and to be more egalitarian. For all the above, the SE demonstrates its close connection and driving capacity to promote and reach the four transversal objectives, putting people and their well-being at the centre of the recovery.

For the purpose of the Spanish Next Generation call regarding SE (PERTE de la Economía Social y de los Cuidados) the following definition is given: "*Se denomina Economía Social al conjunto de las actividades económicas y empresariales que en el ámbito privado llevan a cabo aquellas entidades que, de conformidad con los principios recogidos en el artículo 4 de la Ley 5/2011, de 29 de marzo, de Economía Social, persiguen bien el interés colectivo de sus integrantes, bien el interés general económico o social, o ambos*". Thus, SE entities are acknowledged as carrying out private activities in remittance to the Social Economy Act, and they either have the purpose of achieving their members' collective goals or the general common economic or social interest – or both.

## 2.1. Fishermen guilds

Fishermen guilds are probably the best exponent of SE in the area of sea activities, with a 1,000 year old tradition, at least in Spain. They refer to public law sectoral non-profit enterprises which represent the economic interests of the ship owners of fishing vessels and the workers in the extractive industry or, as the dictionary definition explains, they are "*a company or union of people for a specific purpose*".

They are described by Cabaleiro Casal, André Fernández, R and Gómez Cortés, S. as entities that participate in public administration, both in their constitution and organisation and in their carrying out of administrative functions. Moreover, they can carry out activities in relation to the organisation and commercialisation of fish, seafood and aquaculture, and represent the interests of the sector professionals.

<sup>21</sup> See, among others, Sala Ríos, M. 2022; Birchall and Ketilson, 2009; Boone, Christophe; Özcan, 2014; Calderón and Calderón, 2012b; Carini and Carpita, 2014; Cornforth and Thomas, 1995; Demoustier, 2000; Grávalos and Pomares, 2001a; Monzón, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> For the coincidences and differences between SE entities and the Third Sector see Gómez Álvarez, J.J. (2022) Economía Social y Tercer Sector. *REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, vol. 141, e82255. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/REVE.82255>.

The exploitation of natural resources needs to be controlled to impede their overexploitation and harmful use and, for this purpose, fishermen guilds play a leading role, acting as if they were a public entity. In addition, they also play a private role in the selling and commercialisation of fish. Therefore, they can be considered very peculiar entities which carry out both public and private activities.

The fishermen guilds traditionally act as consultative and collaboration bodies for the administrations with competences in sea fisheries and the regulation of the fisheries industry, and aim to satisfy the needs and interests of their members, with a commitment to contributing to local development, social cohesion and sustainability. Thus, they can be regarded as a valid interlocutor for coastal management plans. This is particularly interesting for the Administration as it is always easier and more productive to talk with the representatives of fishermen that look after the common interest than with all and each of them, bearing in mind their own interests. It is also a good legal form for fishermen as their catches do not compete among themselves and can be sold belonging to this legal entity at a most competitive price.

Guilds are particularly important in Spain as they have several centuries of tradition in our system, or as Franquesa I Artés puts it<sup>23</sup>: *“The fishermen's guilds in Spain, known as Brotherhoods; they have a long history. Some of the current Brotherhoods were founded in the twelfth century as economic associations on religious grounds”*. Notably, Hobbes also described guilds several centuries later, so their importance was known not only in the Spanish system<sup>24</sup>.

In the case of Spain, the 3/2001 Act, of 26 March, 2001 on State Maritime Fishing and the new Act on sustainable fishing and research on fishing<sup>25</sup>, in their Article 45 defines fishermen's guilds as<sup>26</sup>: *“corporations of public law, non-profit, representative of economic interests that act as consultation and collaboration bodies of the competent administrations in matters of maritime fishing and management of the fishing sector. They have full legal personality and the capacity to act for the fulfilment of their purposes”*.

However, fishermen guilds are much more than that stated by the legal definition states. For instance, the historian García Fernández highlights two main objectives of fishermen's guilds that the definition does not consider. On the one hand, the defence and, if necessary, the promotion of the economic and social objectives of all the associated members, whose professional dedications were linked to the sea. On the other hand, the interest in monopolising these branches of economic activity in their respective localities<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, the functions performed by the fishermen's guilds are varied, but all are in the interest of their members and the community. They not only look after the interests of them all in terms of centralising the sale of fish caught by its members and its commercialisation, but they also have other important roles. For instance, the role of defining the standards of the profession; helping members in need or their families<sup>28</sup>; and training, for instance the importance of the maintenance of the cold chain, the quality from extraction to distribution, or of the necessary minimum size of fish. Moreover, other important roles of guilds include risk protection, provisioning of gear, freezers and bait, construction and maintenance of the port docks and, promoting awareness of certain practices.

Thus, not only they are a valid interlocutor, they are much more. For instance, lately, fishermen guilds in Spain have united themselves, lobbying to denounce the price of fuel and receiving certain concessions.

Thus, it can be said that even centuries before the Bruntland report, fishermen guilds looked after the environment as one of their tasks was the regulation of fishing activity. They implemented rules that established the minimum conditions under which the different fisheries were to develop, in order to limit the risk to the species involved in the fishing activity and thus ensure, as far as possible, the continuity of future fishing.

Thus, the fishermen's guilds regulated the time of fishing at sea, the type of vessel to be used or the characteristics that the vessels should have to engage in a particular fishery, the gear to be used, as well as limiting access to certain areas and fishing grounds and the duration of coastal fishing. They also ordered the entries and exits to the sea that all the vessels had to carry out simultaneously, all at the same time, and thus carry out a common fishing<sup>29</sup>.

As one of the most important experts on fishermen guilds, Professor Ugalde, states: *“In spite of the fact that the safety of the fishermen was one of the issues most emphasized by the fishermen's guilds, there could be an economic interest behind it, since in case of misfortune all the members of the fishermen's guild were*

<sup>23</sup> Franquesa i Artés, r., “Las cofradías en España: papel económico y cambios estructurales”, *Quaderns Blaus*, nº15, p. 28: *“Los Gremios de pescadores en España, conocidos como Cofradías; tienen una historia larga. Algunas de las actuales Cofradías fueron fundadas en el siglo XII como asociaciones económicas bajo bases religiosas”*.

<sup>24</sup> See Hobbes, T., “De Cive: on the citizen”, later published in 1951 as *Philosophical rudiments concerning government and society*, London.

<sup>25</sup> Ley 5/2023 de 17 de marzo, de pesca sostenible e investigación pesquera.

<sup>26</sup> The Project has already been passed as “Proyecto de Ley de pesca sostenible e investigación pesquera”. 17 May 2022.

<sup>27</sup> See García Fernández, E., “Las cofradías de mercaderes, mareantes y pescadores vascos en la edad media”, en B. Arízaga Bolumburu, & J. Á. Solórzano Telechea (Coord.), *Ciudades y villas portuarias del Atlántico en la Edad Media: Nájera* (2005). Encuentros Internacionales del Medievo, Nájera, 27-30 July 2004, p.261.

<sup>28</sup> In this respect, a good part of the funds obtained from the fishing auction was also destined to the relief of the elderly, invalids, widows, orphans and the sick, as well as to the distribution of money in times of need, or bad weather.

<sup>29</sup> As explained by Ugalde Zabala, R., in “The fishermen’s guild of Bermeo, a risk- management entity”, 2022.

*obliged to pay for the losses or repairs, besides granting subsidies to widows, orphans or fishermen who were left useless for work”.*

Ugalde, an expert in the matter of risks, highlights the following functions accordingly<sup>30</sup>:

- “a) To act as an entity for consultation and collaboration with the Public Administrations in the general field of the activity and commercialization of fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture products (legal risk).
- b) The defence of the general interests of the associates in their fishing and marketing activity (legal risk and size risk).
- c) To inform and guide its members on the legal norms and measures of a structural or socioeconomic nature adopted by the public administrations in the field of fishing (legal risk).
- d) To establish the organizational and commercialization systems of its fishing products in accordance with the legal norms, and to adapt the volume of production to the demands of the market (commodity risk).
- e) To issue and submit reports and proposals to the Administration on legal provisions, structural and socioeconomic measures, activity plans and the regulation and management of the fishery products market (species/stock level risk).
- f) To promote agreements with financial institutions in order to obtain the best use of financial instruments in the development of fishing activity (financial risks).
- g) To promote associative processes and to formalize commercial collaboration agreements or to formalize inter-professional agreements with other organizations and companies in order to achieve efficiency and profitability in the fishing activity and a greater participation in the processes of transformation and commercialization of fishery products (commodity risk).
- h) To enter into agreements with the Public Administrations in order to carry out market identification, advertising and promotion campaigns for the fishing products of the Basque Country (reputation risk).
- i) To promote and develop training, recreational, cultural and social activities for its members (know-how and talent retention risk).
- j) To exercise in its territorial scope the functions delegated to it by the Public Administrations in matters affecting the professional fishing sector.
- k) The management and administration of its assets and rights and of those acquired by any title.
- l) To promote the adoption of measures tending to technify the extractive and conservation process and the presentation, standardization and commercialization of fishing and quality products (technological risk).
- m) To adopt the necessary measures so that the unloading and sale of the fishing products are carried out in accordance with the established legal norms (legal risk).
- n) To prepare and present the catch and sales statistics in accordance with the instructions of the competent Department on fishing matters.
- o) The management of the fishing resources that individually or collectively may be made available by the associates (species/stock level risk).
- p) To facilitate the free and fair coexistence between employers and workers in order to promote their common interests.
- q) To create and promote the services of common interest that are considered convenient, such as sales of fishing tackle, commissaries, freezing plants, ice factories, dry docks, participation in fishing vessels, etc.
- r) To watch over the safety of vessels and crews (labour risk).
- s) To try to increase and complete the welfare action, as far as possible, in favour of the fishermen and their families, agreeing on what is necessary for the improvement of the elderly and invalid fisherman (labour risk).
- t) To settle the issues raised among the members of the fishermen's guilds within the field of professional activities, as long as they are of common interest to all of them.
- u) To comply with and enforce compliance with these statutes and the provisions that affect them.
- v) All those functions that are attributed by the statutes or by the legal system”.

As can be seen from these functions, the fishermen's guilds can be considered to be the real defenders of private interests, as in any SE entity, but, above all, they are the local defenders of the general interest and sustainability.

The importance of fishermen's guilds for governance and Marine Planning needs to be remembered. For instance, in Spain there are 196 fishermen guilds looking after the general interests of fishermen and especially small-scale fishermen. There is even a National Federation of fishermen guilds that represents them and can be a great interlocutor for Marine Coastal Planning<sup>31</sup>.

Regarding Next Generation funds, for instance, the Canary Island of El Hierro specifically named the fishermen guilds as possible tenders for the Call for actions in Biosphere Reserves to subsidise actions in the Biosphere Reserves of the Canary Islands, with the basic objectives of combining the preservation of

<sup>30</sup> See Ugalde Zabala, R., op.cit., p.22.

<sup>31</sup> This information is available at: [https://cepes.es/principal/members/91\\_federacion-nacional-cofradias-pescadores-fncp](https://cepes.es/principal/members/91_federacion-nacional-cofradias-pescadores-fncp).



biological biodiversity and ecosystems with an environmentally sustainable development that improves the well-being of the population, promoting public participation, research, education in integration between development and environment, and training in new ways to improve such integration<sup>32</sup>.

## 2.2. Associations

Associations provide services where the offer of the for-profit sector fails. They are usually linked to industries covering fundamental rights, especially regarding accessing vulnerable collectives, such as subsistence or artisanal fishermen, ethnic minorities or women. Thus, they can better defend the rights of the people associated, based on the respect of diversity, plurality and tolerance, and should also be listened to and promoted regarding coastal management.

The same advantages we have seen regarding fishermen guilds apply here. On the one hand, fishermen/women do not need to compete against each other, uniting forces and achieving better benefits. On the other hand, they can access better tools and markets. In addition, they can be a united voice to deal with the public administration.

The Spanish network of fishing groups (REGP) is one of the best exponents of these types of associations, as an instrument for learning and interaction among different groups. It is an association of private entities that has the protection of the General Directorate of Fisheries Management and Aquaculture of the General Secretariat of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA). It constitutes the official channel of information, communication and dissemination of the activities carried out to contribute to participatory local development (DLP), corresponding to the General Directorate of Fisheries Management and Aquaculture of the General Secretariat of Fisheries of the MAPA for its management and revitalisation.

This network of fishing groups constitutes a platform that facilitates cooperation and networking among different smaller entities, such as guilds and cooperatives, giving prominence to the contributions of groups, managing authorities and public and private institutions involved in consolidating a sustainable present and a viable future for fishing communities. The REGP appears to be an ideal tool for working online, exchanging experiences and good practices, and stimulating interaction between groups.

The Spanish network of fishing groups is already 15 years old. It initially integrated the autonomous communities and the Local Action Groups of the Fishing Sector (GALP) of the Principality of Asturias, Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia and Galicia, but it now comprises them all. Currently, the rest of the coastal autonomous communities, the Valencian Community, the Balearic Islands, the Basque Country and the Murcia Region are included, as well as the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) of their territories. Specifically, the current programming period has a total of forty-one FLAGs spread over ten autonomous communities.

This platform also facilitates communication with other associations as it has the role of communication with other European Networks, mainly collaborating closely with the European Network of Fishing Areas (FARNET).

Among their success stories, we should mention several projects:

- “MardeVidas2”, by the Fishermen guild of Santa Pola, developed with the collaboration of the Biodiversity Foundation, the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, through the Pleamar Program co-financed by the FEMP. This new method of collaboration among the public and the third sectors needs to be highlighted, most particularly in the context of being able to compete for Next Generation Funds. The objective of this project is to develop a social and environmental dissemination and awareness programme on the protection and recovery of marine biodiversity in Spanish productive marine ecosystems. Starting with the Marine Reserve of Santa Pola, 11 marines reserves have followed. The effectiveness of this formula should be taken as a success case.
- COFBLUEGROWTH: through the association of several guilds, this is a project that has as a general objective the development of a national strategic plan for the blue economy and growth, considering SDGs and the possibilities of the ocean economy and focusing on the sustainable use of coastal areas, seas and oceans to increase social benefits, and the economic and environmental aspects of fishing and shellfish communities. Three of its specific objectives should be particularly highlighted:
  1. Participatory analysis of the current situation of fishing and shellfish communities in terms of blue growth and SDGs
  2. Formulation of an innovative and inclusive sectoral strategic plan for sustainability and the blue economy

<sup>32</sup> See call for tenders at the participant's portal: <https://www.elhierro.es/es/fondos-next-generation-eu>.

3. Inform, disseminate and raise awareness about the situation analysed and diagnosed in the communities and the defined strategic plan, as well as about basic issues regarding the economy and blue growth and environmental sustainability in the fishing and shellfish sector, fostering reflection and promoting participation
  - As we can see, in this project collaboration is by means of an association (another type of SE entity) for the common good. It can also be taken as a possible model to access Next Generation Funds as the Next Generation Funds calls tend to promote the association of small- and medium-sized entities.
- VIGIAMAR is also a project by the National Federation of Fishermen Guilds to use fishermen guilds and fishermen as collaborators in the waste management and warning of episodes of coastal pollution. They are developing an app to give warnings of episodes of contamination by marine debris. The professionals will provide information to create a large national database that can be used by the scientific community to study measures to address the problem.
- A Federation is another way of accessing Next Generation Funds as they include many small- and medium-sized entities.

Regarding Next Generation Funds, MAPA has recently allocated 12 million euros to subsidise innovation projects of the European Association for Innovation from Next Generation Funds. The call has been designed as supra autonomous, thus highlighting the importance of associations of people working in the food industry, such as fishermen associations, environmental NGOs and local action groups. As a novelty in this call, the representative of the group must be a private non-profit entity, and the universities and other entities of the regional public sector may participate in the operational groups as subcontracted members but not as direct beneficiaries of the subsidy. The groups that are beneficiaries will be renamed the "Supra-autonomous Operational Group".

### 2.3. Foundations

Foundations are non-profit organisations whose assets are conditioned to carrying out an objective goal of general interest by the will of their creators. The aim to "provide access for small-scale to marine resources and markets" is of general interest for the community, so foundations can also benefit from public policies of promotion in this area, the same as cooperatives, fishermen guilds or associations. Thus, this kind of entity can greatly assist fish workers by joining forces with them; therefore, they can be considered an asset for coastal management.

Probably the best exponent of a foundation devoted to the sea is AZTI, a scientific and technological centre that develops high-impact transformation projects with organisations aligned with the United Nations 2030 SDGs. Their success is undoubtable.

AZTI's purpose is to drive positive change for the future of humankind, contributing to a healthy, sustainable and fair society. Specialising in marine environment and food, they provide cutting-edge and value-added products and technologies grounded in sound science and research. Their mission is to create and transmit knowledge through the development of transformational projects with organisations willing to accept the challenge of achieving the sustainability goals of the UN, generating wealth and improving the well-being of humanity. As such, they offer a valuable contribution to Next Generation projects regarding the sea, as a reliable partner in research for transformation towards sustainability.

It should be remembered that since 1995, the fisheries sector has changed significantly requiring further action based on science, innovation and the strengthening of the science-policy interface<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, the new project of the Spanish Act focuses on this very area, giving science and research the space they deserve even in the name of the Act.

As a foundation, they are SE, sharing SE values and purpose. As they put it: *"Our culture is driven by collaborative and transformative innovation, value generation, respect, transparency, commitment, efficiency and curiosity"*<sup>34</sup>.

AZTI has become a key player not only in Spain (having different covenants with MAPA), but also in the European marine and food field, providing cutting-edge, value-added products and technologies based on sound science and research.

The new proposal of a Fishing Act goes hand in hand with research in the sector, so AZTI is the foundation with the most important role in this matter.

Some other projects in which AZTI as a foundation takes part are the following:

<sup>33</sup> FAO, "2021 COFI declaration for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture", available at: [www.fao.org/3/cb3767en/cb3767en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb3767en/cb3767en.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> See AZTI at: <https://www.azti.es/>.

- AQUAPEF is a tool to calculate the *#ProductEnvironmentalFootprint* of *#aquaculture* products and learn about new strategies and production methods to improve environmental sustainability and develop methods for communicating it.
- Environmental DNA is the DNA collected from the environment; that is, from environmental samples, such as, for example, seawater. As these samples contain small organisms such as bacteria and phytoplankton but also traces of larger organisms, in the form of cells, tissues or scales released by fish, their examination is used to advance the knowledge of the species they inhabit in an area.

AZTI already works in collaboration with other entities organising workshops among mixed interest groups in fisheries (ship owners, other SE entities, scientists, fishers, etc.), to work towards sustainable fishery management.

## 2.4. Cooperatives

Cooperatives are probably the most common form of SE entities; their contribution to economy and society has been widely acknowledged. For instance, Lerroux notes<sup>35</sup>: “*We need to develop a plural economy. A solid society is composed of three pillars: a democratic government, dynamic companies and in the middle, a very strong co-operative sector, combining business and people. It is about bridging the economy and the society*”. In fact, cooperatives are the best-known exponent of SE.

However, there are very different ways of regulating cooperatives, usually depending on the countries’ political background. Cooperatives have a very long tradition in some EU countries, particularly in the UK and Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy or Portugal. Moreover, in some of these countries the access of workers to capital is promoted from the highest possible source: their Constitutions<sup>36</sup>.

In the fishing sector, cooperatives have not had the same importance in Spain as they have in other sectors, most probably due to the great importance of fishermen guilds, as explained by Cabaleiro Casal et al. in the case of Galicia<sup>37</sup>. However, this does not mean that they should be overlooked as there are still important cooperatives within the sector, mostly with different purposes other than fishing, such as shipbuilders and tourism. As an example, ARVI<sup>38</sup>, a cooperative born in 1964 in Vigo or “Cooperativa de Pescadores Mar de Rota” should be mentioned. They can also play an important role for SSF purposes.

First, we require a definition for the concept of a “cooperative”. A possible one is “*an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise*”<sup>39</sup>.

Up to this point, both Europeans and Americans would agree on that definition. However, it does not include the whole list of values and principles that it comprises. and their fulfilment and control may substantially vary. The main problem is that, in European countries, there is usually comprehensive regulation regarding the full commitment of cooperatives to their values by means of legal principles. These regulations may vary from country to country and are usually stricter in Mediterranean ones, where cooperatives are particularly important, but they all offer a framework for cooperatives to be constituted as such and public policies for them to work and grow.

Cooperative values and principles can be easily recognised as those that still remain today in cooperativism and were adopted by the National Liaison Committee for Mutual, Cooperative and Associative Activities<sup>40</sup>.

This set of co-operative values and principles was designed to leave behind the excesses of the era and was compiled by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1937, later being revised in 1966 and 1995<sup>41</sup>. This latter revision included not only an update of the 1937 principles but also an identity statement and two sets of values: basic and ethical. They are widely accepted and can be summarised as follows, even though some authors highlight that the separation of cooperative values and principles is complicated<sup>42</sup>:

<sup>35</sup> Lerroux, M., F., president of the International Cooperative Alliance at the International Seminar on Co-operatives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) held in Brazil, 03-22-2017.

<sup>36</sup> In the case of Spain art.129.2 of the Constitution says that access to capital from workers, as in cooperatives is to be promoted.

<sup>37</sup> See. Cabaleiro Casal, M<sup>J</sup>., André Fernández, R and Gómez Cortés, S., “Las Sociedades Cooperativas del Mar: op.cit., p.16.

<sup>38</sup> It stands for “Cooperativa de Armadores de Pesca del Puerto de Vigo”.

<sup>39</sup> Definition by the International Co-operative Alliance (1995).

<sup>40</sup> The primacy of the individual and the social objective over capital, voluntary and open membership, democratic control by membership, the combination of the interests of members and the general interest, solidarity and responsibility, autonomy, etc.

<sup>41</sup> See Birchall, Johnston (2005), “Co-operative principles ten years on”, ICA.

<sup>42</sup> See Macías Ruano, A.J. (2022) La igualdad como valor cooperativo y su proyección en la legislación cooperativa. *REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, vol. 141, e82258. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/REVE.82258>, p.18: “*La distinción entre valor y principio es complicada, pero partiendo de la premisa que señala la ACI en la declaración de identidad cooperativa de 1995 de que los principios cooperativos son las directrices mediante las que las cooperativas ponen en práctica sus valores, el foco de la identidad de las cooperativas –o la distinción de otros operadores económicos–, reside en los valores cooperativos. Uno de los valores cooperativos que ha fijado la ACI para identificar a las cooperativas es el de la igualdad*”.

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity and, in the tradition of their founders, members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. The following values are behind the principles:

- Democracy. Every person has the right to have a say and influence all decisions that affect their lives. Thus, in co-operative control is shared.
- Equality. Every person is worthwhile in his/her own right and has the right to have his/her life, dignity and abilities respected and valued equally<sup>43</sup>. As Macías Ruano states, this value exclusively affects the members' roles and is reflected in the cooperative principles of free and voluntary adhesion, democratic management and economic participation<sup>44</sup>.
- Equity. Each person should be treated fairly and have access to all that is necessary to live a meaningful and productive life.
- Self-help and responsibility. People are interdependent and benefit from joining their individual efforts with others to achieve their aspirations and improve their lives as each of us is responsible for our own actions and the impact of those actions upon others and ourselves.
- Solidarity. Shared, coordinated action between individuals and groups is the best way to create a society. Solidarity limits our individual freedom, only to the extent required by real respect for the dignity of others being equal to our own.

To implement the aforementioned values, a set of principles inspire cooperativism, and these principles usually have a clear impact on cooperative regulations. They exist to help us organise how the co-operative operates and to set standards by which we can assess our achievements and make decisions. The co-operative difference has to be based on the core principles rather than the values because other types of entities share similar values. There are three core principles: member ownership, control and benefit.

- Voluntary and open membership: co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons satisfying certain non-discriminatory conditions and willing to participate. People satisfying those conditions may join no matter their gender, religion, race, etc. A specific provision to prevent possible discrimination within the cooperatives is to be made in their regulation;
- Democratic member control: this is usually known as the “One member, one vote” principle. Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. It is not like the capitalist undertaking where rights depend on the capital investment; in cooperatives, all members have equal voting rights;
- Member economic participation: benefits are distributed proportionally according to each member's level of participation in the cooperative, for instance by good salaries for all workers or by returns on sales or purchases, rather than according to capital invested;
- Autonomy and Independence: they are self-help organizations controlled by their members. Whenever they make agreements with other organisations or raise capital from operations with non-members, they keep their democratic control and maintain their autonomy;
- Education and training: members allocate surpluses for educational purposes;
- Cooperation among cooperatives: cooperatives serve their members most effectively and join the cooperative movement by collaborating through local, national, regional and international structures;
- Concern for the community: while focusing on members' needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members. Thus, members can decide where to dedicate the Education and Promotion Funds, and they usually reserve an important part for community projects.

In summary, co-operatives are people centred rather than capital centred<sup>45</sup>. However, if their regulation includes these principles they will not only be constituted as cooperatives but keep on being so for the benefit of the community and their own benefit.

As an example of what their input for SSF can be, Unión Nacional de Cooperativas de Mar de España (UNACOMAR) represents the union of Spanish sea cooperatives at the national level. Even though some authors claim the cooperative form for sea purposes is rare as a result of the great importance fishermen guilds have, there are over 200 sea cooperatives that participate in this union. Thus, the importance of this type of entity for SSF needs to be acknowledged too. For instance, UNACOMAR has participated in the drafting of the EU Green Book.

<sup>43</sup> For the concept of equality in cooperatives see Macías Ruano, A.J, “La igualdad como valor cooperativo..”, op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> See Macías Ruano, A.J, “La igualdad como valor cooperativo..”, op.cit.p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> As stated by J. Birchall (2010) in *People-centred businesses: Co-operatives, Mutuals and the idea of Membership*, p. 6.

As an example of the granted EU Next Generation Funds for Sea Cooperatives, the Cooperativa de Armadores de Vigo has already benefitted from 664,609 euros to help modernise its fleet. This Vigo Shipowners Cooperative leads five initiatives linked to research and technological development in the fishing sector, some of which go hand-in-hand with partners such as Anfaco-Cecopesca, the CSIC, Grandiant and Energylab. These sorts of associations are a real asset to present projects with Next Generation funding.

### 3. Are there other SE entities that could benefit from public policies in the context of SSF?

As we have seen, there is no doubt that the previous types of SE entities can help SSF and so coastal management. We must therefore ask ourselves where the line can be drawn regarding SE entities for SSF that can be of use for coastal management. In particular, whether other types of legal forms can take part of SE and if they could benefit from the possible public policies towards those communities.

Depending on the country, assumptions can be very different. In the EU, we tend to assume that entities with a given form may be part of the SE, whereas others with a different legal form cannot. For instance, we all assume that a cooperative will form part of the SE, whereas a limited liability company will not. However, in some countries, this assumption may be incorrect.

The concept we have of cooperatives or any other SE entity is not a “one size fits all” concept. In some countries, for instance, SE entities have certain constrained property rights, both alienation and accumulation constraints (for example, in Italy or Spain there are very important alienation and accumulation constraints imposed by a substantive law whereby there is a list of causes of withdrawal of the fiscal protection in cases where these constraints are not respected), whereas in others, they do not.

In some countries, there are important limits to their operations with third parties. For instance, agricultural cooperatives in Spain are restrained from dealing with third parties over 50% of their operations, whereas in others there are no limits at all.

In some countries, SE entities must be registered (for example in France, Italy or Spain where in order to be considered a cooperative they must have been constituted and registered as such – see 20/1990 Spanish Act on Cooperatives), and their social, economic and environmental contribution to their community economic development may be measured, whereas in others they are not even registered, which poses enormous difficulties for measuring their effective contribution.

This is why, to use this SE form to implement the target “*to provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*”, there is a need to assess the needs a particular community has, checking not only whether the different SE entities forms exist but also the way in which they do exist.

This ensures that, in practice, form and substance coincide. If the form exists, it must still follow several principles:

- Persons and the social objective take precedence over capital. This means that decision-making should prioritise people or the social objective, over equity capital;
- Profits are mainly distributed based on the work contributed or the service or activity carried out by its partners or members with respect to the social objective of the institution;
- Fostering internal and social solidarity, promoting commitment to local development, equal opportunities for men and women, social cohesion, the integration of persons at risk of exclusion, generating stable and quality employment, work–life balance, and sustainability;
- Independence from public authorities.

Thus, in most countries, SE entities follow these principles and are able to contribute to community economic development, so these entities may be beneficiaries of all sort of public policies such as marine coastal planning or Next Generation Funds.

However, there may be instances where, even though the forms do not exist, there may be entities that really follow these principles. All this means that form is not as importance as substance and we should refrain from making closed lists of legal forms that may limit us. This is the case for Spain, where the Social Economy Act 5/2011 does not ask for a specific legal form, but admits there are other forms that are SE. Thus, there is also a place for other possible legal forms as substance is more important than form and following SE values is the core.

In the case of Spain, there is a compulsory register for these sorts of entities. An entity needs not only to adhere to the principles but also to register as such. However, in other countries such as the USA, there is no need for entities acting on a cooperative basis to be registered, at least at a federal level. In some US States there is a tendency to start to do so for certain types.

We do believe that having a register for SE entities may be an important asset. To develop appropriate management measures for SSFs, it is instrumental to register them first, to be able to get accurate information on different matters such as their scope, stakeholders, operations and impacts.

Unfortunately, when it comes to small-scale vessels, that knowledge is far from satisfactory, as, for instance, current EU fisheries control rules exempt them from accurately reporting their catches and their position while fishing. As a result, it is difficult to estimate their impact on the stocks, and their sustainable management is challenging. Registering these entities and obtaining these type of data may be a first step.

Thus, any entity adhering to the following principles:

- Fostering internal and social solidarity as they share democratic characteristics, transparency and a participatory nature; emphasis of the individual and social objectives over capital; benefits obtained by the business activity distributed in function of work and services done by the members and the social objective of the entity promoting a commitment with local development, equal opportunities for men and women, social cohesion, the integration of persons at risk of exclusion, generating stable and quality employment, work–life balance and sustainability;
- Independence from the public authorities.

Can be said to belong to the SE, so it is important for coastal management to identify and register these SE entities, together with important data, to make them subjects of certain public policies. In this manner it facilitates what Jentoft and Chuenpagdee call “interactive governance<sup>46</sup>”.

In the EU, in order to do so, in 2018 the Commission proposed to modernise the EU rules governing fisheries data and the monitoring of small-scale vessels as part of the revision of the regulation on fisheries control. The new rules would provide an opportunity for small-scale fishers to become fully involved in the long-term management of the fish stocks.

#### 4. SE entities in the context of SSF in Spain: the key to accessing Next Generation Funds

The Next Generation EU programme is regarded as a mission to change the EU, modernise it, and make it greener and digitalised<sup>47</sup>. As Mazzucato explains: “*in innovation, the State not only ‘crowds in’ business investment but also ‘dynamizes it in’ – creating the vision, the mission and the plan*”<sup>48</sup>. These gigantic funds are there to achieve the mission. Once they are transferred to the States, they have to approve their own Strategic Plans for Economic Recovery and Transformation.

On 15 March, 2022, the Spanish Council of Ministers approved the Strategic Project for Economic Recovery and Transformation (herein called PERTE) for the naval industry. This is a project based on public–private collaboration and focused on the transformation of its value chain through its diversification towards marine renewable energies and low-emission ships, its digitisation, the improvement of its environmental sustainability, and the training of its employees<sup>49</sup>. Among other previous Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation to which SE entities can work with, it is an opportunity to help implement the transformation of SSF in Spain by means of the SE entities working in the sector.

The development of this naval PERTE foresees a total investment of 1,460 million euros with a contribution from the public sector of 310 million euros and a private investment of 1,150 million euros. This is a considerable amount of money at a time when fuel is particularly expensive and the sector faces several issues (overexploitation of fishing, need for modernisation, etc.). However, according to the Plan, the Naval PERTE can contribute to the modernisation of the sector in Spain, increasing its competitiveness by approximately 1% and achieving an annual growth rate of 9% for the sector. It is expected to contribute to the creation of close to 3,100 quality jobs, mainly in peripheral regions, thus contributing to the demographic challenge policy.

As we explained earlier, we are not in the initial phase when upon making a cost/risk analyses the answer may be too much cost and too many risks and uncertainty. These high risk investments on innovation at an early stage have usually been taken by public entities as “private finance has become too short-termist and increasingly dependent on government labs that engage in high risk portions of the innovation chain before committing its own funds”<sup>50</sup>. Research and development for these purposes, integrating public funding technological developments into real innovation and green products, has already been carried out by SE working for SSF, such as AZTI, for a very long time. We are now at an implementation phase, when the

<sup>46</sup> Jentoft, s. and Chuenpagdee, R. *The Quest for Transdisciplinarity in Small-Scale Fisheries Governance*. In *Transdisciplinarity for Small-Scale Fisheries Governance*; Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> For Next Generation Funds, see the collective work led by Campos Acuña, C. (2021), *La gestión de los Fondos Next Generation*, Wolters Kluwer, Madrid.

<sup>48</sup> See Mazzucato M. (2014), *The Entrepreneurial State*, Anthem Press, London.

<sup>49</sup> See Orden ICT/739/2022, de 28 de julio, por la que se establecen las bases reguladoras para la concesión de ayudas a actuaciones de integración y transformación de la cadena de valor industrial del sector naval, dentro del Proyecto Estratégico para la Recuperación y Transformación Económica para la modernización y diversificación del ecosistema naval español (PERTE NAVAL), en el marco del Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia.

<sup>50</sup> See Mazzucato M. (2014), *The Entrepreneurial.., op.cit.*, Carlota Pérez’s foreword, p. XXII.

costs are lower and the certainty is higher. Public entities need to keep investing because guaranteeing a steady flow of funds is crucial for implementing changes, and that is one of the reasons behind the Next Generation Funds.

This 15% increase in competitiveness, the possible 9% growth rate and the crucial need to do something to help SSF are sufficiently good reasons to try to implement the change.

The possible roles that each of the group participants can have in the Naval PERTE are the following:

1st Industrial promoter. The entities participating in the group must carry out specific actions in its industrial establishment to fulfil this role. This requirement is met if the entity, the shareholders or the management team have experience in comparable industrial production in the activity, in a pilot plant or on an experimental scale, for at least a period of three years counted until the end date of the application submission deadline. More than one entity may have the role of industrial promoter in the grouping. Private legal persons and state trading companies may also be industrial promoters.

2nd Provider of technology or knowledge. They provide the knowledge or technology necessary to carry out some part of the proposal. Each of the technology or knowledge providers that are part of the group must carry out some of the activities included for technology or knowledge providers. This requirement is met if the entity carries out the activity for which it is requesting financing for at least a period of two years from the end date of the application submission period. More than one entity may have the role of technology or knowledge provider in the grouping. Only private legal persons can be providers of technology or knowledge. As we have seen, SE entities such as AZTI have already played this role, in this case for over 30 years.

3rd Interlocutor with the Administration. A designated entity from among the beneficiaries that are part of the group is responsible for channelling with the Administration the relations and communications indicated in the call, in each of the phases of the concession procedure. The interlocutor will have the obligation to transfer to the rest of the participants all the communications that the granting body communicates through the electronic means established in the call. As we have seen, SE entities such as fishermen guilds and associations have a very long tradition in this role and shall be considered valid interlocutors.

Moreover, SE entities for SSF may also join in with other calls, such as the agri-food call, as fishing is specifically mentioned in the Strategic Plan. In this agri-food call, in each application there are tractor projects formed by either individual or cooperative projects. The idea of cooperative projects is the key-bone throughout the call, with compulsory environmental plans in line with the same values SE entities have.

In order to participate, there shall be at least 6 entities; 4 of these need to be small- and medium-sized entities. By asking for a majority of them in the project, the idea of small-scale is very much reinforced. They also need to belong at least to two different Autonomous Communities. Of particular interest is the so-called PITSA plan, among others, for quality control and food security that can be applied to fish. The total contribution by means of lump sum payments or credits can reach up to 80% of the project's budget.

SE entities can also join with the SE call and other calls such as the energetic one. There is a need for collaboration with these sorts of entities in all the calls, so this can be an opportunity to modernise and transform SSF in Spain and overcome several of the issues SSF faces.

It should be remembered, as Mazzucato points out, that the relationship between the State and the private and third sectors needs to be symbiotic rather than parasitic<sup>51</sup>. For this purpose, SE values are at the core of SE entities, giving back to the local entities where they are: to members, to workers, to the environment. In this manner, their role can help make a true ecosystem.

## 5. Conclusions

The oceans' sustainability can only be achieved through increased international cooperation and good management systems. Thus, one of the targets is to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources: within SDG number 14, one of the main objectives to do so is via the promotion of SSFs.

The adoption of measures to achieve SDG 14 could simultaneously contribute to the achievement of other SDGs, such as zero hunger and the reduction of poverty with the recovery of the fishing sector. Moreover, it could also help improve gender equality, considering that it is women who carry out much of the work in SSF. In this way, SDG 14 is related to the purpose of other SDGs that address poverty, hunger, employment and economic growth, gender equality or the climate.

<sup>51</sup> See Mazzucato M. (2014), *The Entrepreneurial*, op.cit., p. 23.

Even though we tend to think of remote islands when we speak about SSFs, it nonetheless has great importance in Spain. Thus, the Spanish common fisheries policy contains a number of provisions designed to incorporate the specificities of small-scale coastal fisheries. One example is that the small-scale fleet is exempted from certain obligations that apply to larger vessels, such as those on fishing authorisations, landing declarations, sales notes and separate stowage.

In accordance with the UN 2030 Agenda, we need to ensure regulations and an easy and fair governance to protect fish for future generations, particularly through SSF. Therefore, following a bottom up decision-making process, the right to fish and the governance of communities depending on it must be carefully regulated. This is where SE entities are important as they follow the general interest and are bound to act ethically and protect the general interest of future generations, and so they need to be registered and have surveillance and control over their members.

As we have seen, there is no specific form of SE entity that can be “a one size fits all” for the purpose of promoting SSFs. On the contrary, there are examples of success stories for associations, foundations, cooperatives or fishermen’ guilds. Thus, following a set of SE principles is crucial rather than the specific legal form.

Next Generation Funds in the EU pay attention to the sector, especially in Spain, to the extent that the sector can be said to be the first one at the EU level. This is the reason for the possible participation of SE entities in several of the Plans for Economic Recovery, Transformation and Resilience with EU Next Generation Funds. The collaboration between the public sector and SE entities has a very long tradition in marine planning and this can certainly help Next Generation projects as they are based in this form of collaboration.

SE entities of SSF can participate in several of these plans as there is a need for several entities to be included, and their small- and medium-size scale is also essential.

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