

THE POWER OF SOCIAL E ENTERPRISE S IN CONFIS CATED ASSE ETS

The Power of Social Enterprises in Confiscated Assets - Workbook



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Contents

Introduction	5
1. Why Confiscated Assets from Organised Crime?	8
2. Why Reuse Confiscated Assets for Social Purposes?	11
3. Case Studies in Europe	14
4. The Current Situation of Youth in the EU	16
5. How Can This Benefit the Community?	19
6. How Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets Can Benefit Youth	22
7. Case Study of Social Enterprise Projects on Confiscated Assets for Social Reuse	24
8. How to Improve (the Potential of) Civil Economy and Young Entrepreneurship	26
9. Policy Framework	31
10. National SWOTs	35
ALBANIA	35
BELGIUM	37
BULGARIA	39
FRANCE	40
GERMANY	42
ITALY	44
MALTA	47
PORTUGAL	50
ROMANIA	51
SPAIN	53
Conclusion	55

This toolkit is useful to you if you are an organisation that:

1. is committed to improving/supporting ethical and lawful economic activities aimed at promoting inclusion, overcoming poverty, and empowering young people;
2. is looking for information and expertise supporting its lobbying local, national, and European authorities to promote the re-allocation of assets confiscated from organised crime for use in social/economical projects that benefit the community, particularly young people;
3. is engaged in the involvement of young people in social entrepreneurship initiatives;
4. is seeking guidance on how organisations and partners/sponsors can pitch the allocation of confiscated assets for social projects;
5. needs best practice models of social projects that have used confiscated assets elsewhere in Europe to assess risks and learn from other experiences.

Introduction

Since 1997, European civil society organisations have promoted the public and social re-use of confiscated assets as a key tool for social and economic prevention of criminal phenomena.

By activating communities against criminal infiltration and for the recovery of movable and immovable assets, they aim to create new vectors of social and economic welfare. Some of these organisations, including Libera and other CHANCE network members, have always believed that the repression of organised crime should be complemented by a greater involvement of civil society. This idea was strongly supported at international level through Libera's commitment to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime since 2000. Furthermore, in line with the European Commission, this direct commitment by citizens should be achieved primarily through the support of reporting and clarity of information to build a common strategy to prevent and combat Serious and Organised Crime.

This European commitment has taken shape through the following key steps:

- Libera representatives participated in a public hearing at the European Parliament as part of the Resolution for the Action plan against organised crime on 9 October 1997.
- Libera made a presentation to the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) in 2009 with the proposal for a Directive on the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets, incorporating the inclusion of public and social re-use of confiscated assets.
- Libera supported the Special Commission on organised crime, corruption and money laundering (CRIM) in 2012 for the development of a European strategy against criminal systems.
- Libera cosponsored the Parliamentary Intergroup on transparency, the fight against corruption and organised crime (ITCO) in 2015.
- Since 2015, Libera has been involved as a consultant in the Asset Recovery offices' (ARO) Platform promoted by the European Commission and Europol.
- In 2019, the CHANCE Network presented its Political Agenda to the European Parliament. It included the promotion of public and social re-use of criminal assets and implementation of specific activities to encourage in-depth exploration and discussion of the topic within the institutional context and programming.

EUROPE HUB Project

The Europe Hub project was developed as one of the outputs of this commitment. EUROPE HUB stems from the work performed by Libera and the CHANCE network in the fight against organised crime. At the European and international level, their action was triggered by the globalisation of organised crime. Their dual mission is to monitor the cross-cutting dimension of these criminal activities and to implement transnational strategies to defend human rights and promote social justice. The key Objectives of the project are:

- To strengthen the cooperation among the associations on the informal network CHANCE in the field of youth, considering youth as a driving force for future-oriented well-being and welfare
- To raise awareness on the impact of social entrepreneurship on the youth employability, with a particular focus on social enterprises developed in confiscated assets at EU level.
- To tackle the project objectives, the CHANCE network provides support and perspective from the realities in different European countries.

The CHANCE Network

CHANCE (Civil Hub Against organised Crime in Europe) is a Civil Society Organisation network that gathers associations, movements, informal groups and activists from all over Europe. Although informally active since 2014, the CHANCE Network was officially launched in 2019 at the European Parliament. Its aim is to promote cooperation among Civil Society Organisations from different countries in confronting organised crime, mafias and corruption, and to promote equity and solidarity in European society. On 3 April 2019, the CHANCE network presented its Political Agenda to the European Parliament on 15 thematic points, from proposing a new common definition on the subject of ‘organised crime’ to strengthening confiscation instruments through public and social re-use of confiscated assets. The network aims to bring the fight against serious and organised crime and corruption to the centre of the European debate. The CHANCE network represents a new opportunity to address these criminal phenomena, parasites of society and the economic system, with new strategic directions that start from sharing innovative tools and good practices, without neglecting dialogue with the institutions of reference.

Among many different partners around Europe, one of its promoters is the association Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie, which moreover promotes

two other international networks: the African network PLACE – Peace and Liberation in Africa through Change and Engagement – and the network ALAS – América Latina Alternativa Social, in Central and South America.

CHANCE operates in close cooperation with national and European Institutions and with the academic and judicial world. Because criminal organisations operate in an increasingly global way, it is necessary to provide answers that do not stop at the national borders. To be effective, these answers must go beyond police and judicial cooperation among states. Cooperation between Civil Society Organisations is essential to positive action towards a more just society. ■

The CHANCE Network is composed by:

Albania: Engim Albania | KeBuono | Partners Albania for Change and Development.

Austria: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime.

Belgium: Basta! – Belgian Antimafia: Steps Towards Awareness | OBESSU | S-COM – Sustainable Communication Aisbl.

Bosnia – Herzegovina: CPCD – Center for Civil Society Promotion.

Bulgaria: CHANCE Bulgaria | CSD: Centre for the Study of Democracy.

Denmark: CHANCE Denmark.

France: ALDA – Association of Local Democracy Agencies | Échanges et Partenariats | European Civic Forum | DeMains Libres.

Germany: Eine Welt e.V. Leipzig | mafianeindanke e.V.

Greece: KMOP – Social Action and Innovation Centre.

Malta: CHANCE Malta | Republika.

Montenegro: MANS – Mreža za afirmaciju nevladinog sektora.

Netherlands: Slow Food Youth Network.

North macedonia: Balkan Civil Society Development Network.

Portugal: Between – Partnerships 4 Development.

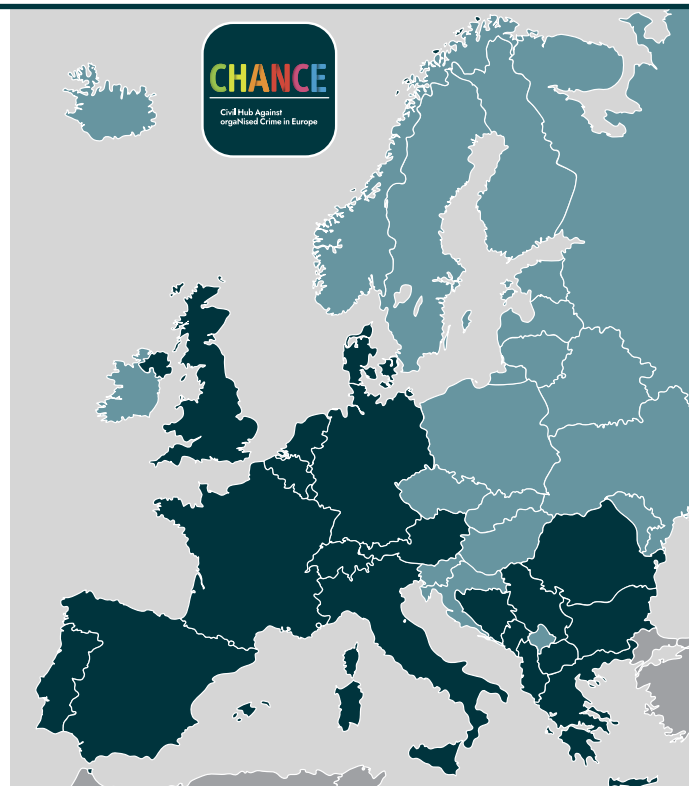
Romania: ACDD – Asociația pentru Cooperare și Dezvoltare Durabilă | Funky Citizens | PATRIR | RISE Project.

Serbia: PROTECTA.

Spain: FIADYS: Fundación para la Investigación Aplicada en Delincuencia y Seguridad | INCOMA | Legalidad Democrática sin Fronteras | Fundació SURT.

Switzerland: CHANCE Switzerland.

UK: FIRM UK.



1. Why Confiscated Assets from Organised Crime?

Europe's current economic and social situation increasingly requires institutions and citizens to bring forth innovative initiatives aimed at strengthening local communities through new tools for supporting citizen involvement.

By making 2022 the European Year of Youth, the European Parliament and Council have highlighted the fundamental role civil society organisations play in promoting youth engagement. Therefore, improving the construction of a more cohesive and inclusive Europe, the civil society organisations working in the European framework have a fundamental role in the promotion of youth engagement, especially after the European Parliament and Council Proposal, in October 2021.¹

According to the latest Eurojust Annual Report², in 2020, organised crime cases in Europe increased by 13%, bringing the total to 8,800 criminal groups active in Europe. They are increasingly acting at a transnational level, adapting to contexts and exploiting legislative, judicial and cultural gaps. Additionally, 7 out of 10 of the criminal organisations investigated in Europe operate in multiple states and 40% operate in more than one criminal sector.³ Currently, the illicit market's impact in the EU is estimated at around 110 billion euros (SOCTA 2021), about 1% of the European Union's GDP in 2021. If we add to this that only 1.1% of illicit profits are currently seized⁴, it is clearly most urgent to implement advanced and effective measures. Organised crime and its illicit trade are increasingly penetrating politics and the everyday life of all European residents, primarily the EU's young people, damaging the rights and freedoms of every individual and the community as a whole.

One of the biggest challenges currently facing the EU and threatening the future of many young Europeans is the increase in organised crime cases in Europe and the impact they have on citizens, business, institutions and the European economy. Among the European institutions, a sense of urgency for this problem has fortunately been growing in recent years. Given the knowledge and best practices that the CHANCE network has built up in these past years, with the Europe Hub project, we want to propose innovative youth support measures that can also make a hopeful contribution to tackling the problem of organised crime. More specifically, we aim to do so by applying the social entrepreneurship model at the local, regional, national and EU level with a focus on the public and social re-use of confiscated assets as provided in the Stockholm Programme⁵ and in Directive 2014/42/EU⁶ of the European Parliament. This could respond to the prevailing needs of European youth, while promoting a culture of legality and social responsibility through the reuse of such confiscated assets.

Social and public reuse of confiscated assets is one of the most important political and social innovations of recent years. It has given new impetus to the design of spaces for social inclusion, a real milestone for all those territories that are victims

of criminal violence. The construction of alternative contexts guarantees equal rights to all citizens and allows territories to grow in a smart, sustainable and inclusive way through the contribution of national institutions, guaranteeing effective support to all those realities that operate in the field of social inclusion, active citizenship, youth empowerment and inclusive youth employment. Therefore, creating public and social projects in confiscated assets is a fundamental tool for creating a direct dialogue with the institutions and strengthening the relationship of trust with the European Union. This offers a clear sign of fighting against organised crime through new opportunities for economic and social development for the territory. The fight against organised crime is closely linked to the community's ability to generate a sense of belonging, mainly among young people. The adoption of measures to promote social inclusion through a multidisciplinary approach should become a strategy, prioritising social entrepreneurship as a decisive tool to strengthen them. Furthermore, the ethical dimension of the routes arising from the re-use of confiscated assets for social purposes is found in the co-responsibility that has transformed assets from 'exclusive' to 'common' and shared goods.

Organised Crime and its impact on society

*'A continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are often in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through corruption of public officials and the use of intimidation, threats or force to protect its operations.'*⁷

Organised crime is a widespread phenomenon that harms society for multiple reasons:

1. once invested in the legal economy, the revenues generated by illegal activities conducted by organised crime become a threat to the legitimate economy. They push legal businesses out of the market with relatively unprofitable investments that organised crime can afford, aiming to reinvest capital gained through illegal activities;
2. organised crime presents a threat to the community through the use of illegal practices including corruption and extortion, often conducted through intimidation, threats or violence, as well as through the harm of public institutions' legitimacy as a result of the misuse of public funds.⁸

On an individual level, organised crime is particularly widespread in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities where the government's presence is weak. Through violence and intimidation, criminal organisations aim to make use of individuals in par-

ticularly disadvantaged positions by offering them relatively high amounts of money and benefits. In exchange, said individuals conduct illegal and often deadly activities on their behalf, and are thus made scapegoats for such crimes.

At an international level, globalisation has facilitated the spread of transnational organised crime, which benefits from legal loopholes and from a global economy, conducting illegal activities through the evasion of national law enforcement and by profiting from the relative lack of international cooperation. Transnational organised crime harms development at an international level and operates particularly in the fields of health (through counterfeit medicines), environment (through illegal logging and illegal natural resource extraction) and weapons through the illicit arms trade.⁹ Data from the UN estimates 2.7% of global GDP¹⁰ to be composed of money laundering, and the World Bank has declared that around \$1.6 trillion are used annually for bribing public officials.¹¹ ■

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- 1 European Commission (December 7th 2021). *The Commission welcomes the political agreement on the European Year of Youth*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6648
 - 2 EUROJUST (2021). *EUROJUST annual report*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/eurojust-annual-report-2021.pdf>
 - 3 EUROPOL (2021). *Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/socta2021_1.pdf
 - 4 EUROPOL (2016). *Does crime still pay? Criminal asset recovery in the EU*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/criminal_asset_recovery_in_the_eu_web_version_0.pdf
 - 5 Official Journal of the European Union (May 4th 2010). *THE STOCKHOLM PROGRAMME — AN OPEN AND SECURE EUROPE SERVING AND PROTECTING CITIZENS*. Retrieved on October 24th 2022 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:115:0001:0038:EN:PDF>
 - 6 The *DIRECTIVE 2014/42/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the European Union* aims to make it easier for national authorities to confiscate and recover the proceeds and instrumentalities from crime in the EU. It sets out minimum rules for freezing and subsequently confiscating the proceeds and instrumentalities of crime. Source: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014L0042>
 - 7 UNODC (2018). *Defining organised crime*. Retrieved on October 30th 2022 from <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-1/key-issues/defining-organized-crime.html>
 - 8 UNODC (2018). *Activities, organisation and composition of organised criminal groups*. Retrieved on October 30th 2022 from <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-1/key-issues/activities-organization-composition.html>
 - 9 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (September 2nd 2022). *Transnational organised crime: A threat to global public goods*. Retrieved on October 30th 2022 from <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background-er/2022/transnational-organized-crime-threat-global-public-goods>
 - 10 United Nations. *Tax abuse, money laundering and corruption plague global finance*. Retrieved on October 30th 2022 from <https://www.un.org/pt/desa/tax-abuse-money-laundering-and-corruption-plague-global-finance>
 - 11 Seager, A. (July 11th 2007). *Bribery costs \$1 trillion a year – World Bank*. Published in The Guardian. Retrieved on October 29th 2022 from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2007/jul/11/4>

2. Why Reuse Confiscated Assets for Social Purposes?

One idea that seems common to both academic studies and reports about practices of social reuse of confiscated assets is that it transmits to citizens the idea that ‘crime does not pay.’

Besides conveying this strong symbolic message, the endeavour to restore to a community what criminal organisations had (often violently) taken from them, moreover fosters a solid potential for societal transformation.

Criminals, particularly mafias and mafia-type organisations, perpetrate their unlawful activities in pursuit of profit. The wealth they generate and accumulate, even when re-invested in activities or assets that would have been lawful except for the illicit provenance of the funds that secured them, is in effect taken away from society at the expense of law-abiding citizens. The price of this theft is paid primarily and mainly by the most vulnerable members of the community, including young people for whom opportunities to grow and prosper are frustrated by the diversion of common resources into the pockets of those who have stolen them.

Prosecution, conviction and adequate punishment of mafia criminals are important deterrents against mafia crime. However, this does not lead to full justice. In fact, criminal sanctions alone are not sufficient to address the loss of the community resulting from the actions of the criminals who stole from them. The seizure of assets unlawfully obtained from the proceeds of crime is an additional deterrent against organised crime because it attacks the core motivation of criminal activity. There are several ways these assets could be repurposed for community use and compensate to some extent for the losses the community has suffered at the hands of the mafias.

The social re-use of assets that had previously been exclusively exploited by criminals or for criminal purposes enables their transformation from symbols of an unlawful subtraction from the community’s collective interest into a good for public benefit.

Confiscated Assets

‘The permanent deprivation of property by order of a court or administrative procedures, which transfers the ownership of assets derived from criminal activity to the State.’¹

Confiscation of assets from criminal organisations helps to undermine their fiscal and coordinative capabilities. At the same time, it allows for reparation of injustices done to organised crime’s victims through the use of confiscated assets, as provided in Article 14 of the Organized Crime Convention.²

Culture of Lawfulness

The concept ‘culture of lawfulness’ is our translation of the Italian term *cultura della legalità* understood to represent those rights and obligations that all citizens should seek to fulfil to ensure a healthy relationship between individuals and their society.

A ‘culture of lawfulness’ contrasts with a *cultura di mafiosità*, a systemic and pervasive abandonment by *mafiosi* of their lawful obligations in pursuit of their interests. Mafias secure social consensus through *omertà*, a code of compliance and acquiescence with the mafia system secured by intimidation and, when it is in the mafia’s interest, violence. Mafias seek to replace lawfulness with territorial control and the unlawfully obtained wealth and power that derive from it.

Thus, even a small portion of the vast wealth amassed by organised criminals could make a world of difference by, for instance, being used to support voluntary organisations in their mission to contribute to the welfare of the community.

Socio-economic activities that do not only operate within the confines of the law, but that moreover fulfil a mission of distributing the value added by that activity rather than extracting it as profit, have the potential to create satisfying jobs and projects that replace the violence and submission by mafia crime with social cohesion.

Indeed, experiments in social entrepreneurship have helped to spread an alternative and solidarity-based form of economy that is not about making profits but, instead aims to produce benefits for the community. Here the profits from the services it proposes are reinvested in the maintenance and growth of the activity, and thus of the community that reaps the benefits and participates in it.

Besides strengthening the idea of common good, the social reuse of even a small part of the confiscated assets may generate outcomes that greatly extend beyond the monetary aspect. The Italian academic Vittorio Martone identified four levels at which Social Reuse generates value:

*‘At the **political level**, these projects require the principle of transparency and accountability; e.g., by establishing independent committees to prevent political influencing in the identification of priorities for confiscated assets/proceeds allocation; promoting standardised procedures and adjudication criteria, and setting up regular monitoring mechanisms following allocation of the assets/proceeds, with sanctions in case of misuse.’³* Both state institutions and civil society must share this principle to legitimise this cooperative effort and to avert fears of ill-use or unfair competition with the profitable sector. Put into practice, these principles set the basis for reinforcement of institutional trust and development of civic participation.

At the **identity level**, several aspects seem important to highlight. First, and as mentioned above, promotion of solidarity practices and values that, for their part, contribute to (re)generating feelings of belonging and place identity and attachment. Second, the confiscated and reused property becomes a memory tool, with the dual objective of keeping alive the victims’ memories, telling their stories and at the same time contributing to demystifying criminal activities.

At the **economic level**, the social reuse of confiscated assets has focused on ‘relational goods, agriculture and social tourism, personal assistance and services, associative centres and educational activities, circular economy, civil and social enterprise (Martone, 2020).’ Besides playing an important part in the development of a new form of economy, these occupy a fundamental part of the social and economic fabric, along with the state and the profit sector.

Finally, at the **ecological level**, reuse of confiscated assets has also contributed to promoting the recovery of polluted land, ecological and social sustainability, agroecology and defence of indigenous cultures. ■

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- 1 UNODC. *Confiscation*. Retrieved on October 29th 2022 from <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-10/key-issues/confiscation.html#:~:text=Confiscation%20of%20assets%20or%20property,criminal%20activity%20to%20the%20State>
 - 2 UNODC (November 15th 2022). *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto*. Retrieved on October 29th 2022 from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>
 - 3 Barbara Vettori, Ph.D.* Boban Misoski, 2019

3. Case Studies in Europe

GAVEA – Galicia, Spain

As a result of a confiscation process of a Laion sailboat, the Galicia Vela Adaptada (Galicia Adapted Sail) project was launched in 2022. Thanks to the effort of the Association for the Disabled People of Bisbarra de Muros (ADISBIS-MUR in Spanish), member of the Confederación Galega de Persoas con Discapacidades (COGAMI Galician Confederation of Disabled People, the boat has been re-used to offer the social integration experience of sailing to people with disabilities.

Main features of GAVEA project:

- It creates new synergies between the crew members and all the stakeholders involved for the protection and valorisation of the common good.
- It promotes the adaptation and renewal of marinas for disabled people.
- It raises awareness about people with disabilities, enhancing their ability to have an active role in society.
- It implements recreation activities for people with disabilities.
- It facilitates the beneficiaries' personal growth through teamwork and recreational activities on the boat for facilitating their integration into society.

Villa Celestina – Bologna, Italy

The Villa Celestina¹ was confiscated from organised crime in 2008. In 2019, a cooperation agreement Libera Bologna and Bologna Municipality, signed a cooperation agreement allowing its temporary re-use. The management of Villa Celestina has an innovative aspect, as the accessible area of the asset was made immediately available, before its renovation was completed. In this sense, the asset's symbolic value was recovered as soon as possible; from an exclusive area used by organised crime, it became a common space for the whole society.

Main features of Villa Celestina project:

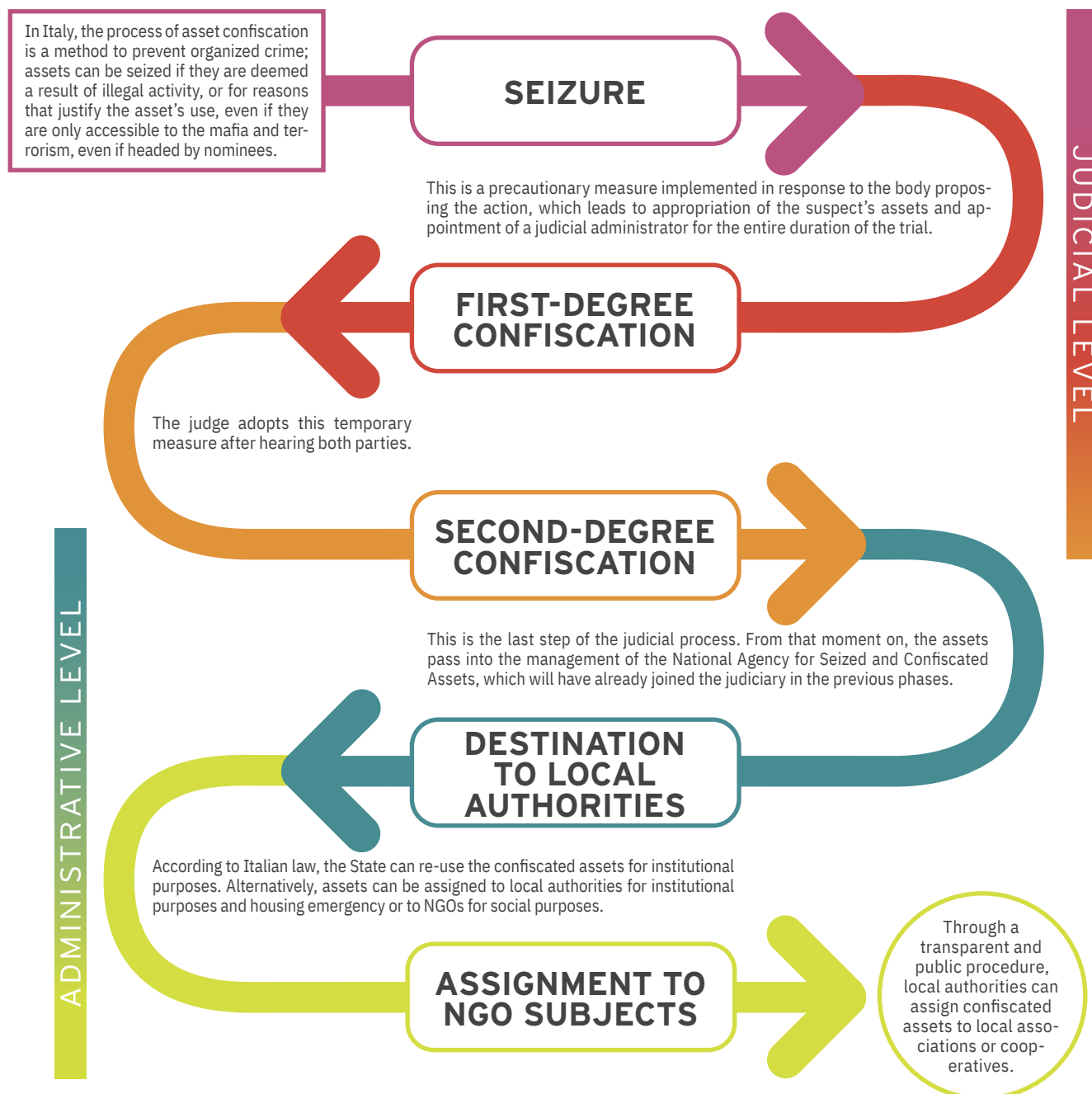
- It became immediately available for social purposes to avoid its neglect.
- The garden is the only accessible part of the confiscated asset and was turned into an urban garden as well as a co-space for studying and a café run by a local cooperative.
- It has served as a venue for concerts and cultural events funded by the Municipality, to broaden the knowledge of Villa Celestina among the local people.
- Throughout the year, many young people were involved in the development of the summer activities. In 2021, the Confiscated Assets Festival was organised at the Villa.

Office of National Probation Directorate – Bucharest, Romania

The asset was confiscated in a money laundering case. The Ministry of Justice manages the building, which the Bucharest Court of Appeal confiscated, based on Criminal sentence no. 53F / 26.08.2018, Criminal Section II in file no.

2185/2/2015*, and then final judgment on 10.10.2019 by the criminal decision no. 306/A/ 10.10.2019 issued by the High Court of Cassation and Justice. The building will become the National Probation Directorate office.

The path from seizure to allocation to NGOs: the example of the Italian model



1 For more information:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Villa-Celestina-bene-Confiscato/278233302732312>
<https://territorio.regione.emilia-romagna.it/qualita-urbana/rigenerazione-urbana/usi-temporanei/mappa-luoghi-ut/luoghi/villa-celestini>
<https://www.labsus.org/2022/07/da-villa-confiscata-a-bene-comune-con-i-patti-e-possibile/>
<http://www.comune.bologna.it/archivio-notizie/villa-celestina-il-bene-confiscato-alle-mafie-stato-consegnato-al-comune>

4. The Current Situation of Youth in the EU

There is no shared definition across Europe of what being ‘young’ means, or in which period a person is considered to be so. The approximation varies depending on the socio-economic characteristics of each country and its idiosyncrasies.

However, there is a shared understanding that what has been defined as ‘youth’ is a period characterised by the passage from a childhood to adulthood¹ and defined by different and transcendental vital and personal changes such as passing from student to worker, abandoning the family home, and becoming financially independent for the first time. For example, when considering Eurostat, Eurobarometer studies and other sources, the people included within this age group ranges from 15 to 29 years old. In some cases, subdivisions are used, the most recurrent being 15 to 19, 20 to 24, and 25 to 29 years old.

In 2019, there were 74.2 million of European citizens aged 15 to 29², which represent 16.6% of the absolute EU population. This number fell to 73.6 million³, representing 16.45% of the EU population, of which 35.8 million were young women.

When studying the distribution of this youth population in the territory, we see that in 2020 the region of Île-de-France was the one with the highest number, with 2.4 million people living around the French capital. In second place, we find the northern-Italian region of Lombardy with 1.5 million, and third, the southern-Spanish region of Andalusia, with 1.4.⁴

However, these data only allow us to analyse the situation in macro numbers. If we focus on the weight that the youth population has compared to the total of the population, the French regions of Guiana and Mayotte and the Dutch region of Groningen are at the top of the list, with a 23% rate. On the other side, we find the German regions of Chemnitz and Brandenburg, with 11%, followed by the also German regions of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt and northern-Spanish region of Asturias in Spain, all of them with a 12% rate.

When considering the EU youth’s socio-economic status, the first element we analyse is the unemployment rate. Following the last EUROSTAT surveys, the EU youth unemployment rate in August 2022 was 13.8%.⁵ The situation is heterogeneous and varies dramatically when analysing different countries in detail. The highest rate is found in Greece, where 28.6% of the young population was unemployed in August 2022⁶, followed by Spain with 26.6%, Estonia with 24.6%, and Italy with 21.2%. On the opposite side, in the same period, we have Germany, where just 5.7% of their under-25 population was unemployed, followed by the Czech Republic with 7.9%, and Poland with 8.4%.

Another interesting aspect to analyse is the rate of NEET youth; that is, young population outside of the work and education or training markets. In 2021, 13.1%⁷ of the EU 15–29-year-old population fell into the NEET category. The highest rates were registered in Italy with 23.1%, Romania with 20.3%, and Bulgaria with 17.6%. On the other side, we find the Netherlands with 5.5%, Sweden with 6%, and Slovenia with 7.3%. These data highlight great inequalities in the EU in youth employment. Furthermore, it is important to consider the quality of the jobs and the living conditions provided for young people. Different socio-economic indicators show how these conditions have both worsened in recent years.

The in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for youth aged 16–29 in the EU was 9.7% in 2021.⁸ The country with the highest rate is Romania, with 15.8%, followed by Italy with 13.1%, and Spain with 13% of its young population at risk of poverty even if working. In Italy, for example, the in-work poverty scenario has worsened in the last few years, particularly after the COVID-19 crisis. Recent data shows that 29% of young workers/employees aged 15–24 years receive low wages⁹ compared to 10.1% of the national population. The same study shows that 26.6% of Italians aged 18–24 are considered at risk of poverty. This situation also varies depending on gender. As an example, in Spain, in 2020, the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for 18–24-year-old women was 16.7%, while for men in the same age group, it was 14.9%.¹⁰ In the Czech Republic, just 1.4% of the young working population was at risk of poverty in 2021.

When analysing the total young population (15–24 years old) at risk of poverty or social exclusion, regardless of their employment status, the EU rate in 2021 is 26.9%.¹¹ However, there are big differences when analysing the different countries. The highest rate is registered in Romania with 39.4%, followed by Greece with 36.7%, and Bulgaria with 35.3%. On the other side, this rate in the Czech Republic is 11.5%, followed by Slovenia with 12%, and Cyprus with 16.9%. These statistics are also in line with the youths' perception about their current situation. Research performed in 2022, framed within the European Year of Youth, showed that 28%¹² of the respondents consider that one of the priorities should be boosting employment and tackling unemployment, while one out of three considers that improving education and training should be one of the top priorities. ■

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5. How Can This Benefit the Community?

Every community has problems waiting to be solved or at least opportunities for change. Every community, moreover, has skills, ideas and motivation to mobilise. The community dimension reflects a desire for social change.

Boosting civic engagement

Directly linked to individual and collective action, community action involves considering the needs of the people living there. Projects are developed from the difficulties encountered by the community members, which are linked to social problems.

At the same time, in the last few decades, the decrease of institutional trust towards democratic representatives has been a growing social phenomenon that is hard to ignore. As pointed out by Eurofound (2018)¹, between 2004 and 2017, the proportion of EU citizens who had confidence in the European Parliament fell by 12 percentage points, from just over 56% to slightly under 44%, while confidence in the European Commission fell from 50% to 41% over the same time period. In a 2021 and 2022 e-survey, Eurofound has subsequently shown that confidence in the European Union and national governments have further decreased during and after the pandemic period, making it more difficult to manage and contain the spread of the infectious disease. Also, the COVID-19 crisis greatly affected the democratic process worldwide, as restriction measures forbade or discouraged participatory engagement of EU citizens. Although democratic participation, based on open government values, can come under extreme pressure at a time like this, the principles of transparency, participation and accountability can also make a meaningful change in the response to the actual crises. This relates to the need for young people to be involved at all stages of the democratic process, filling the perceived gap between citizens and institutions, finally becoming an active change agent. In this scenario, confiscated assets' social reuse by social enterprises emerges as an invaluable opportunity that can lead to civic engagement at the same time that it benefits the community.

Firstly, by being able to work in direct contact with local populations and their needs, reuse initiatives have the potential to lead to the empowerment of vulnerable communities. These, with the associations and institutions' support, can construct collective, democratic and inclusive initiatives that can shape the territories and contribute, at the same time, to generation of a 'social muscle.' This scenario facilitates the associations' work and inclusion of the more in-need population groups. Thus, communities benefit from an increase in social capital and democratic development.

Social economy – An initial approximation

The concept of ‘social economy’ has been understood and defined in different ways over time. It is a broad concept, containing different meanings as well as different contradictions.² This is why we consider it important to try to narrow down the concept.

In contrast to non-social forms of production and economy, which are based on the pursuit and maximisation of economic profit, the social economy’s objectives aim to maximise social benefit. Although the activities conducted by social enterprises are also focused on production and are considered economic, these enterprises’ final objective is not the mere search for profitability and monetary benefits. This is also why so many non-profit enterprises are considered examples of social enterprises.

EU states have established laws that regulate the areas in which a company must work to be considered socially responsible. Activities are heterogeneous and vary from country to country, ranging from health care, education and training to social tourism. However, they can all be encompassed under the umbrella of goods and service production activities focused on improving the target population’s living conditions.

This, however, should not lead to misunderstanding and confusion about social enterprises. Social enterprises’ actions are based on the production of goods and services, just as in traditional economic enterprises. Long-term economic sustainability and market positioning are also sought. However, all this is always accompanied by a quest to provide society with solutions and tools for the problems from which it suffers.

Secondly, social economy entities reusing confiscated assets build social projects focused on inclusion of disadvantaged people in the community or of those having special needs. Disadvantaged persons receive training and are able to develop their work abilities. Social reuse initiatives create new job opportunities in the legal economy.

Thirdly, social reuse initiatives develop the local economy, improving the community’s reputation. Such initiatives improve the overall economic climate in the region, allowing other legal economy initiatives to flourish. Workers involved in the legal economy through the social reuse initiative are accustomed to higher legal and professional standards and techniques, become aware of their rights (having higher expectations and increased self-trust) and spread the word to their fellow citizens. For instance, such workers may be employed part-time in a social reuse initiative and work the rest of the hours in other companies. Through social contagion, workers from social reuse entities disseminate good practices and newly learned techniques and skills within the other companies in the community.

Fourthly, people in the community learn through social reuse initiatives that they may earn their living lawfully, without being dependent on a mafia boss. ■

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- 1 Eurofound (October 2nd 2019). *Annual review of working life 2018*. Retrieved on November 1st 2022 from <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2019/annual-review-of-working-life-2018>
 - 2 Libera (2016). *BeneItalia – GENERATING VALUE THROUGH PUBLIC AND SOCIAL REUSE OF PROPERTY CONFISCATED FROM ORGANISED CRIME*. Retrieved on October 30th 2022 from https://www.confiscatibene.it/sites/default/files/blog-upload/7_BeneItalia_english%20version_2021_0.pdf

6. How Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets Can Benefit Youth

Strengthening and development of inclusive societies was established as one of the European Youth Goals¹ developed as a European Commission initiative and included in the EU Youth Strategy for 2019–2027.²

This was translated into different initiatives and programmes developed with the aim of boosting young people's inclusion and cooperation.

As mentioned before in this workbook and supported many times by different stakeholders and socio-economic indicators, the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences have had a major impact on young Europeans' living conditions, further worsening the already delicate situation and deepening gaps and inequalities. One indicator to be considered is the at-risk-of-poverty or the social exclusion indicator, defined as people who are in at least one (but possibly two or all three) of these situations: at-risk-of-poverty, severe material and social deprivation, and share of people living in households with very low work intensity. In 2020, this at-risk-of-poverty rate for young people aged 15–29 living in the EU was 25.4%³, which represents 18.1 million people facing at least one of the previously mentioned situations. This is even more worrying when looking at historical trends: between 2015 and 2019 it fell by 3.9%, but since 2019 there has been a rebound of 1.1%.

The data also matches European youth's opinion regarding their current living conditions and situation. To mark the European Year of Youth in 2022, a survey⁴ was conducted to analyse which priorities young people thought the year should focus on. When asked about their expectations for that year, 30% of young people said that they expected more efforts to better integrate young people in the job market, and 28% answered that they expected more efforts on the inclusion of disadvantaged young people. Against this backdrop, the need is evident to work on reducing these inequalities and to seek social inclusion of the new European generations.

Civic engagement actions can be considered one of the main educational pillars that can change young people's context and perspectives. Young people's participation in civic engagement overturns the idea that new generations are inactive, without interests and with a passive attitude. Dismantling these stereotypes can point out the potentiality and opportunities of young people as change makers, strengthening their belonging to the European Union and their EU values.

Civic engagement activities can merge different ideas, projects, and sensibilities of young people with different backgrounds. It is important for this experience to be perceived in a multilateral way, where youth are part of the overall 'general project'

and they are listened to, involved, and supported by all other parties of society. This is a process that must be imagined, built and followed, is capable of empowering individuals and the group, and that allows for diversity, in a dynamic where everyone can feel valued and not excluded. This process can help to deeply understand social work, enacting the most authentic cooperation for the same aim. Being able to perceive oneself as part of a larger commitment can be a fundamental source of motivation.

In a historical moment marked by the lack of confidence in social change, implementation of targeted actions allows one to regain the confidence to have a different world, restoring value to one's commitment and usefulness. Social projects help target groups involved to better understand the different points of view and types of relationships, as well as a different way of economic, social and cultural model. Conducting activities that leave tangible marks as a legacy on the territories, in and for the communities, is the first way to banish the narrative of an unchanging present and future. It is essential, therefore, to be able to include the young people and their desire to engage in projects for social transformation, and in growing activities, in managing spaces for initiatives aiming to promote justice and rights. ■

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- 1 The years 2017/2018 saw the 6th cycle of the *EU Youth Dialogue – Youth in Europe: What's next?* from which the eleven European Youth Goals emerged. Source: European Youth Portal. *European Youth Goals*. Retrieved on October 20th from https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/european-youth-goals_en
 - 2 Official Journal of the European Union (18th December 2018). *Information and Notices*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>
 - 3 EUROSTAT (2022). *Young people – social inclusion*. Retrieved on October 18th 2022 from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Young_people_-_social_inclusion
 - 4 European Commission (2022). *Flash Eurobarometer 502. Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth*. Retrieved on October 23rd from <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=81597>

7. Case Study of Social Enterprise Projects on Confiscated Assets for Social Reuse

KeBuono Social Pastry – Fier, Albania

In January 2018, ENGIM signed an agreement for 5 years with the Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AAPSK) to start the first social re-use project in a confiscated asset from Albanian organised crime, after 8 years of abandonment of the property and judicial processes.

The main objective of KeBuono is to build a culture of legality and non-violence through a sustainable social entrepreneurship in which the main beneficiaries are women who are victims or at risk of domestic violence.

From one side, the project creates the opportunity for these women to be trained and to work with pastry, supporting their economic and social inclusion. From the other side, KeBuono is also a pastry school, open to women and young people in vulnerable conditions, where they can learn the basics of pastry and traditional Italian recipes.

The KeBuono experience has contributed to overcoming doubts that public institutions and civil society organizations held toward the social re-use of confiscated assets from organized crime both among. It has promoted a different way to fight organised crime, combining the social and preventive aspects with the financial sustainability of social businesses.



Main figures of KeBuono Social Pastry:

- 50% of staff belong to socially vulnerable groups.
- 2,000 hundred hours of lessons.
- 59 people qualified.
- 40 people employed.
- More than 1,000 children involved in workshops and activities.
- More than 1,200 youth sensitized.
- More than 9 schools & centres collaborated with KeBuono.
- 4 awareness campaigns about gender-based violence, promotion of Roma culture, prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, inclusion of disabled people.

For more information: <https://www.facebook.com/KeBuonoPasticeriSociale>

Libera Terra Mediterraneo Consortium – Italy

To promote the practical implementation of Law 109 of 1996, a public call the first launched the idea of social cooperative in 2000. Spurred by Libera Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie, the first social cooperative was founded in 2001, to put into practice the social repurposing of confiscated mafia land.

The now 9 autonomous, self-sufficient and sustainable social cooperatives have been united under the Libera Terra Mediterraneo consortium since 2008, with the aim of pooling their agricultural activities and addressing the market in a unified and effective way.

The organic products resulting from these cooperatives are marketed under the registered Libera Terra brand. In this framework, the agency Cooperare con Libera Terra has been established, with the aim to support the entrepreneurship development of cooperatives managing confiscated assets, through the exchange of the know-how knowledge transfer.

This example has demonstrated the opportunities raised by confiscated assets' social reuse to develop a new economic and social system and to enhance/emancipate territories affected by organised crime violence.



Main figures of Libera Terra Mediterraneo Consortium:

- It brings together nine social cooperatives, managing confiscated assets in Sicily, Calabria, Puglia and Campania.
- It promotes a virtuous and sustainable economic system based on legality, social justice and the market.
- It produces quality agri-food products obtained with eco-friendly and human-friendly methods.
- It enhances the territories, applying to their productions these values: quality both in the production and management processes; excellence for continuous improvement; organic production; sustainability; involvement of local communities; continuous monitoring of activities.

For more information: <https://www.liberaterra.it/en/>

8. How to Improve (the Potential of) Civil Economy and Young Entrepreneurship

Over the years, EU Member States have been committed to increasing opportunities for youth entrepreneurship¹ as a way to make possible an easy transition from school to work and to boost employment.

One of the core actions is to promote and encourage entrepreneurial competences both in and out of school. Non-formal learning is particularly effective in stimulating entrepreneurial attitudes. It fosters experiential learning through hands-on activities like enterprise simulation and job shadowing. As shown by a study conducted by the OECD², these activities are especially helpful in offsetting the fear of failing, a frequent disincentive among young people to embark in entrepreneurial ventures. During the Europe Hub project training sessions, CHANCE conducted a collective process of developing a European level SWOT analysis about the situation of associations working with young people. To better develop a strategic plan to induce changes among the European youth population, we decided to conduct a similar reflection at the level of our associations.

The SWOT analysis is a technique developed for strategic planning with the aim of identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that a person, entity or organisation may regarding a particular problem, originally, business competition. It is designed for use at initial stages of decision-making processes to assess different stakeholders' strategic position. Through the analysis, one can detect the different internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving a project's objectives.

The SWOT analysis performed focussed on the situation of European associations working with young people, as the results could prove useful for such associations to work on improving their performance. We followed a bottom-up process, in which the Europe Hub project's partners conducted individual country analyses. To help the analysts, we focussed on the associations' internal aspects; i.e., their strengths and weaknesses.

The first **strength** that it has been noticed is that there is a large number of associations working and giving opportunities to youth. Also, they provide common spaces to meet and create work positions with decent wages. These associations provide knowledge about the young people and their differences within the territory. Therefore, they also count on the support of youth due to their high engagement in social projects. Finally, an important aspect to underline is some countries' experience of associations working in confiscated assets with young people.

Regarding the associations' weaknesses, associations may face obstacles to reaching young entrepreneurs in vulnerable situations as a target group. Related to this, little public knowledge of social reuse projects is available and few associations provide specific training and mentoring programmes for young entrepreneurs. A low number of

associations help with the red tape burden when applying for public programmes and funds. To conclude, it has been noticed associations' inability to ensure a long-term provision of services due to the poor management of funds. At the same time, this entails precarious working conditions for the associations' workers.

In terms of the external factors (opportunities and threats) influencing the European associations, the favourable European legislation and programs that facilitate the associations' work were identified as an opportunity, since there are many funds and programmes available to start youth projects. Different education and training opportunities also have a direct impact on youth and youth entrepreneurship. As a result, the associations can manage and support highly educated youth. In Europe, moreover, civic society strongly supports social causes. The digital economy's opportunities create a proper and accessible environment for entrepreneurship. Regarding communication with youth, we considered that, when properly managed, social media provides a natural channel to reach out to them.

Finally, the research has highlighted a number of threats. First of all, the current socio economic instability has a higher impact on youth entrepreneurship. Moreover, in some countries, there is a tendency for political parties to try to control youth associations (making them more dependent). The lack of transparency on data about confiscated assets and the difficulty to access-related information is also considered a threat for the activities of the associations. In the same context, associations and sometimes also the institutions perceive a lack of a culture of social reuse. As a result, there is little experience on social reuse of confiscated assets. Finally, there is a lack of inclusive legislation and continuity in the distribution of funds to associations that support entrepreneurship of young people, partly due to the lack of a clear definition of the categories 'Young people' and 'Young Entrepreneurs'. ■

Set of strategies to improve the situation of social entrepreneurship in confiscated assets:

1. The Establishment of a European network consisting of organisations working on confiscated assets' social reuse and national and EU institutions

We propose for civil society to establish a European network consisting of organisations working on confiscated assets' social reuse and national and EU institutions. It is essential to build networks of collaboration and mutual support among organisations active in the field of social reuse of confiscated assets across Europe. Organisations with more experience and social power will be able to support less experienced ones, while best practices that are more widespread in some countries could pollinate others with less awareness of the tools foreseen in the Directive 2014/42/EU, article 10.3.³ At the same time, it is necessary to enter into a dialogue with the institutions and stakeholders managing these assets, to encourage the collaboration between organizations and these institutions.

2. A clear definition of young entrepreneurs in Europe

We propose to agree upon a clear definition of young entrepreneurs in Europe, with the purpose of harmonising policies and strategies. We believe it is essential to establish a clear and unequivocal definition of the young entrepreneur at the European level that can serve as a basis for both European programmes and national policies.

3. The creation and implementation of training and mentoring programmes in Europe for young entrepreneurs within the above-mentioned European network

We propose creation and implementation of training and mentoring programmes in Europe for young entrepreneurs within the above-mentioned European network, specifically aiming to encourage social economy youth entrepreneurship. The lack of training and mentoring programmes for young entrepreneurs exposes the need to bridge the current gap through the development of European training programs and justify the use of the previously proposed regional network in Europe to structure these programs.

4. The support of new social projects in the early stages

We propose that the EU and other public funding sources support new social projects in the early stages. Young entrepreneurs acknowledge that one of the main problems faced when starting a social project is the financial restrictions due to the inherent characteristics of these projects.

tackling weaknesses, alleviating threats, promoting opportunities and empowering strengths

To reduce this initial barrier, we propose that the EU and national institutions offer this support as a starting point that can help social projects in the early stages.

5. More campaigns to raise public awareness in Europe on social reuse of confiscated assets

We propose to promote the dissemination of campaigns to raise public awareness in Europe on social reuse of confiscated assets. One of the most notorious problems detected at the continental level is the lack of social awareness, in many countries, of this type of social initiative. Hence, it is essential to take advantage of the networks and channels of the different organisations and institutions working in the field to create live and social media communication campaigns focused on raising citizen awareness on confiscated assets' social reuse.

6. The creation of social media campaigns to promote social economy entrepreneurship

We propose the creation of social media campaigns to attract and recruit young people willing to collaborate in social projects and promote social economy entrepreneurship, especially among those in the most vulnerable condition. Furthermore, some organizations have shown a difficulty in reaching young people and attracting them to become involved in their activities. This creates a big problem as it compromises the long-term durability of organisations, while underusing the valuable resource of the highly prepared European youth. The proposed communication campaigns will be focused on attracting them through Social Media networks, the youth communication channel *par excellence*.

7. The creation of awareness-raising programmes on the importance of social entrepreneurship to be implemented at early stages of life

We suggest the creation of awareness-raising programmes on the importance of social entrepreneurship to be implemented at early stages of life (from secondary school to high school). These programmes should also spread awareness about the opportunity that confiscated assets can represent when speaking about social entrepreneurship. We consider it is essential to introduce entrepreneurship skills at the schools from an early age and promote an attitude prone to entrepreneurship. This can be translated into different initiatives such as early entrepreneurship education in schools, workshops on entrepreneurship as extra activities, competitions (e.g., simulation of real company activities), organising events that present and promote youth entrepreneurship, etc.

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- 1 Official Journal of the European Union (June 5th 2019). *Council Conclusions on Young People and the Future of Work*. Retrieved on October 18th 2022 from [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019X-G0605\(02\)&rid=3](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019X-G0605(02)&rid=3)
 - 2 OECD (February 2018). *Developing entrepreneurship competencies*. <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/ministerial/documents/2018-SME-Ministerial-Conference-Parallel-Session-3.pdf>
 - 3 *DIRECTIVE 2014/42/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the European Union*. Retrieved on October 20th 2022 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014L0042>

9. Policy Framework

Various initiatives and laws have been mentioned throughout this paper, both at the continental and national level, focused on regulating the asset confiscation process among the EU countries and their social reuse.

EU Legislation

We therefore consider it pertinent to gather them together, distinguishing their area of action, for those organisations that wish to delve deeper into current legislation, with a view to developing projects focused on confiscated assets' social reuse.

At the **EU level**, the first recommendations that attempts to set a base for the regulation of the process of asset confiscation and transnational collaboration are presented in **Framework Decision 2006/960/JHA**¹, **Council Decision 2007/845/JHA**² and in the **Stockholm Programme 2010**.³ These are followed by the resolution of 25 October 2011⁴ on organised crime, which already gives more precise definitions of the desired direction. This process would finally lead to the adoption of **Directive 2014/42/EU**.⁵ This Directive is currently being revised and is expected to be updated in the next few months.⁶

The text emphasises that cross-border organised crime's main objective is financial gain. The innovation the Directive brings is that it explicitly recommends that institutions advocate for the social/public interest reuse of confiscated assets. To this end, it is suggested that the authorities be provided with the necessary material/legal instruments to be able to develop their work in line with these guidelines. Subsequently, Regulation 2018/1805 for mutual recognition⁷ was enacted to deepen state-to-state cooperation on asset forfeiture in the fight against cross-border crime. The establishment in 2007 of the ARO – EU Asset Recovery Office, is worth mentioning as well. In 2012, this platform invited and encouraged member states to create their own asset management agencies.

National Legislation

Following the different EU recommendations, in particular Directive 2014/42/EU, EU states have adapted their national legislative framework on different levels and grades to match the lines established by the Commission. Here are some examples that show how heterogeneous the situation is:

Austria: a National Agency for the management of confiscated assets has not yet been established in the Alpine state. Art. 408 of the Criminal Procedure⁸ Code establishes that assets considered interesting for scientific or historical contexts should be made available to public institutions. Besides this, the assets should be used to cover the justice system's material efforts.

Belgium: the *Central Office For Seizure and Confiscation in Belgium* (COSC), created in 2003, is the organism responsible for recovery and management of confiscated assets. Meanwhile, FPS Finance is responsible for executing sales of confiscated assets. This is because Directive 2014/42/EU is being implemented, and the current legislation does not mention social reuse. In some particular cases, the public prosecutor might seize the movable part, based on the art. 433 of the Penal Code. In October 2022, a draft law was presented to the Belgian Chamber to introduce the ‘Reuse of Confiscated Assets to Organised Crime for Social Purposes’ and ‘Crim Org Funds.’⁹

Bulgaria: different measures aimed at combating organised crime and social reuse of confiscated assets are presented in the Penal Code, the Code of Penal Procedure, the Combating Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property Act, the State Property Act and the Rules on the Implementation of the State Property Act. The *Commission for Combating Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property* is the institution responsible for confiscation and management of assets.

Croatia: *Asset Management Offices* are the institutions responsible for managing assets, following Directive 2014/42/EU. Croatia applies freezing and confiscation for all crimes, and the convicted person may be ordered to pay an amount of money corresponding to the value of the assets subject to confiscation.

Cyprus: the *Unit for Combating Money Laundering* (MOKAS) was established in 2009 as the national asset management responsible. The Prevention and Suppression of Money Laundering Activities Laws¹⁰ were adapted to match the Directive 2014/42/EU.

Czech Republic: the *Asset Management Office* was established in 2017 following Directive 2014/42/EU. Czechia ensures adequate management of property that is frozen with a view to subsequent confiscation.

France: creation of *Agence de Gestion et de Recouvrement des Avoirs Saisis et Confisqués* (AGRASC) was provided in 2010.¹¹ Subsequently, the asset confiscation process was regulated in 2021.¹² The law establishes mechanisms for appropriation, allocation and social re-use of assets, as well as compensation for the victims.

Germany: Germany did not assimilate Art 10.3 of Directive 2014/42/EU. Therefore, no measures regarding social re-use of confiscated assets have been developed. The main use given to confiscated assets is victim compensation. Otherwise, assets are auctioned.

Greece: the institution for the management of confiscated assets is the *Special Secretariat of Financial and Economic Crime Unit SDOE-ARO*¹³, established in 2018. Greek authorities are currently working with the SDOE on the creation of legislation following Directive 2014/42/EU.

Hungary: the *National Investigation Office (Nemzeti Nyomozó Iroda)* is the body responsible for confiscated assets management. Asset confiscation is stipulated in Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code¹⁴, and its social reuse in the Act XIII of 2000 on the Public Re-use of Confiscated Assets.

Italy: the *Agenzia Nazionale per l'Amministrazione e la Destinazione dei Beni Sequestrati e Confiscati alla Criminalità Organizzata (ANBSC)* established in 2010¹⁵, is the responsible body for asset management. Social and public re-use of confiscated assets is established in Law n. 109/96.¹⁶

Latvia: asset management depends on the Economic Police Department of the Central Criminal Police Department of the State Police. The 2017 Law on Execution of Confiscation of Criminally Acquired Property¹⁷ established the transfer of half of the confiscated proceeds to the state budget. The process was then regulated by the Cabinet Regulation No. 769.¹⁸

Lithuania: even when the country ensures the proper confiscated asset management, following the Directive 2014/42/EU, an Asset Management body has not yet been constituted.

Portugal: the *Gabinete de Administração Bens (GAB)* is the responsible body for asset administration. Law 30/2017¹⁹ regulates the social re-use of confiscated assets, as well as its allocation and management process.

Romania: the *National Agency for the Management of Seized Assets (ANBI)* is the responsible body for confiscated asset administration. Its creation was established in the Law no. 318/2015.²⁰ Meanwhile, the *National Fiscal Administration Agency (ANAF)* is the entity responsible for the disposal of confiscated property. Asset confiscation and social re-use process was first regulated by the Government Ordinance no. 14/2007 for the regulation of the manner and conditions of disposal of the goods entered, according to the law, in the state's private property. In 2021, the National Strategy on Asset Recovery 'Crime does not pay!' for the period 2021–2025 was introduced with the approval of Decision no. 917/2021²¹, which updates the legislation on the process, following Directive 2014/42/EU.

Spain: Art.26. RD 948/2015²² established the creation of the *Oficina de Recuperación y Gestión de Activos (ORGA)* as the country's asset management body. Its responsibilities are to trace, recover, conserve and administrate the assets, with the aim of delivering them to NGOs or public Administrations for social reuse. If not, the law establishes that they must be sold in auction. Between the priorities that the ORGA must follow when developing its work, we find supporting programmes to provide assistance to victims of crimes; providing impetus and resources to the Victim Support Offices; supporting social programmes aimed at preventing crime and treating; intensification and improvement of actions to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and suppress crime, including the following offenders; and supporting international cooperation to combat serious crimes.

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10. National SWOTs

In this chapter, we summarize the SWOT analyses performed by the Europe Hub project's partners.

ALBANIA



When it comes to strengths, the first thing noticed is that the number of Albanian associations working with young people is increasing, but less in medium and small cities. Something we also consider positive is also increased Government attention to issues that impact the new generations (see the new National Youth Agency).¹

If we focus on the weaknesses, the first thing to consider is that the Albanian government is not working properly to contain the emigration of young people to other countries. Another weak point is low sustainability for social enterprises in confiscated assets, which impacts also young beneficiaries or actors. Local public policies on youth are very far from reality and from those directly involved; there is a mutual distrust that does not favour an improvement in the current situation. Last, young people are not aware of the possibility of socially reusing a confiscated asset.

Regarding the opportunities detected, there are several for CSOs in Albania to start social enterprises. Moreover, the EU delegation and other countries are giving funds through different programs. It must be underlined that social enterprises born from initiatives of young Albanians are growing, but not throughout the country. The capital is benefiting most from this growth, while in other cities there is less youth activism.

On July 19, 2022, negotiations began to bring Albania into the European Union. Relations between Albania and the EU are getting stronger; this implies that there will also be increasingly opportunities for young people. Last, confiscated assets' social reuse for organisations is a regulated practice with a law very similar to the Italian one. Regarding threats, there are several issues to stress. One worthy to be mentioned is the proliferation of NEET youth. The main groups of NEETs are unemployed youth. These are young people who have become discouraged from searching for a job due to the difficulty in accessing the labour market, whether for financial reasons, discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnicity, or a simple lack of available jobs; family care responsibilities for example looking after children or other family members. However, on the other side, many young Albanians are also emigrating to go abroad, after having benefited from a long or medium period of training. This means that the country uses a lot of resources to train these young people who later decide not to stay. The non-flourishing economic situation is also pushing young people to engage in opaque and non-legal activities. Moreover, due to the decrease in the number of young people, many schools, especially in rural areas, are closing, increasingly causing aban-

donment of rural areas and education.

Another issue that also needs to be stressed is that there is a law on social enterprises recognized by the state, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The law, however, does not work, because it is not based on reality. This is the distancing of institutions from local realities. During the school year 2021–2022, as part of the RISE-Alb project, following training of teachers of some schools in Fier, ENGIM conducted workshops on legality education. During these, topics such as social enterprise, the way organizations operate and develop projects and social reuse of confiscated assets were developed. From these meetings, it emerged that there is no type of information on these issues and that it would be advisable to increasingly inform young people about the existing realities, the benefits that the reuse of confiscated assets by associations can bring and about the existence of future possibilities of which they can take advantage. It is necessary to accompany these young people on visits to existing and functioning confiscated assets, in practical exercises and simulations that can lead them to reflect on the presence of the State and to plan on opportunities, benefiting from them.

Rural areas are being abandoned and early school leaving is increasing. The consequences are always a smaller number of students attending schools and a greater number of unused classrooms and school facilities. It is increasingly important to convert these emptied spaces into spaces lived by the community, when possible, involving organisations and inhabitants in activities that can make them protagonists in the places to which they belong. In Albania, some schools function as community centres. It would be advisable to give greater strength to this model, increasing funds and the number of schools considered community centres and stimulating collaboration between organisations, institutions and communities that are experiencing this difficult period. At the same time, it is appropriate for the state to support with greater strength the existence and start-up of youth centres in urban areas, a space where they can express their interests and talents and where they can also organise themselves.

It is advisable to stimulate the formation of youth organisations where there is a lack, providing them with the necessary tools (such as training) to be able to establish themselves as such, to present projects and be able to manage them. Increasingly, young people are choosing to emigrate for work outside their cities or in some cases outside the country. Theirs is obviously a forced choice. It is becoming increasingly urgent, partly as a response to this problem, to start the Youth Guarantee program also in Albania to integrate them into the labour market. Precisely to encourage their integration into the Albanian labour market, it is also important to encourage families and young people who decide to finish their studies after compulsory school so that they can acquire professional skills. With the acquisition of professional skills through training courses, young people will be able to ask for better working conditions and a fairer salary in their country of origin, also favouring a change in the Albanian market over time. ♦

BELGIUM



Working on a SWOT analysis about Belgium is not easy, as a study cannot be done on a national scale but must cross several levels and layers. Belgium is in fact a federal state with its parliament, ministries and public administration bodies operating at federal level. In parallel, however, there are three regions (Brussels-Capital, Flanders and Wallonia) and three linguistic communities, with their respective parliaments, ministries and public bodies. Consequently, we observe a multiplication of policies and institutions responsible for implementing certain policies and allocating resources. Although there are therefore innumerable weaknesses and threats, we nevertheless note how this local subdivision can also have positive returns in terms of efficiency and presence in the territory.

The current situation's main Strength is the historic support to NGOs and civil society organisations. Belgium has in fact always supported social policies and promoted funding to support culture and active citizenship. In addition to this, we should observe a good dialogue with authorities concerning Youth and social Entrepreneurship, visible through the numerous public initiatives on Youth projects.

Of course, this is also possible thanks to the fact that Belgium has efficiently implemented EU Cohesion Funds as well as other European resources to boost the Social Economy and Youth Entrepreneurship Programmes. Beside these Strengths, several Opportunities lead to improving the situation in Belgium. Application of the current regulation has several possibilities to be expanded or improved:

- Belgium can extend art. 433 quaterdecies to regions, communities, municipalities, local institutions, social cooperatives and NGOs as beneficiaries
- Municipalities can impose their right of pre-emption to acquire confiscated assets and then choose to reuse them for social purposes (see the project 'Les Ateliers du Midi' in Saint-Gilles, Brussels)
- Application of the European directive 2014/42 (art. 10.3) regarding confiscated assets' social reuse could help in expanding the possibilities for young social entrepreneurs who can be inspired by the best practices already existing in other countries (e.g., Italy or Spain)
- In October 2022, the PS-Group (Socialist Party Group) presented a draft law at the Belgian Chamber to introduce the Reuse of Assets Confiscated from Organised Crime for Social Purpose and for the Social Economy.

Besides the legislative opportunities, a wide range of programs or policies can also be explored.

Starting from the fact that the level of youth education and employment are quite high with regard to other European countries, Belgian youth can benefit from different platforms to support starting entrepreneurs, as well as from the presence of training and incubator programs for social entrepreneurship. On an economic level, Belgium associations can count on various ways of funding (social) entrepreneurship, and among them, we can find the European Cohesion Funds that could be used to stimulate social entrepreneurship among youth.

Last but not least, the presence of European institutions in Brussels allows associa-

tions to more easily be in contact with those institutions and therefore to easily have access to youth and entrepreneurship funding programmes.

However, today Belgium is going through a particular historical period in the fight against mafias and criminal organisations. This delicate phase is bringing it to confront its own weaknesses and expose its many threats. The fragmentation of competences/authorities due to the Belgian state's federal structure is often a limit to several policies as it is not always clear where to find necessary information or funding, etc. There is no specific plan for 'youth social entrepreneurship' as such, nor specific legislation regarding social reuse of confiscated assets (a draft law was recently presented to the Belgian Chamber in October 2022). There is no distinction between penal confiscation and civil confiscation and the assets are sold through the same platforms, with the risk that criminal organisations again buy their own property. Still regarding confiscated assets from organised crime, there is no (free) availability of confiscated assets for reuse as there is no transparency regarding available assets. This makes the debate on these topics less credible and effective.

On the educational level, there is an important lack of resources for youth as they have probably never learned how to make a business plan, apply for funding, make their proposal credible to obtain subsidies, etc.

All those weaknesses expose the Belgian Country to new threats beside the old ones. The economic situation is getting worse, with natural repercussions on social exclusion, with the several consequences:

- school drop-out and unemployment in more difficult neighbourhoods;
- attraction for quick/easy money through criminal organisations (especially in the biggest cities);
- increasing level of corruption.

The political disagreement about how to fight organised crime in Belgium without a doubt has a very negative effect on the current situation as we are involved in two phenomena:

- from one side, new forms of organised crime increasingly violent;
- on the other side, the greater public has a very low perception of organised crime.
- From a cultural point of view, we are involved in a mythologization of mafia phenomena due to the image conveyed by the media.

Finally, due to the international crisis following the war in Ukraine, public funding that could have been employed for social and youth entrepreneurship will probably be spent elsewhere. It is important to remember how from the legal arms trade, very large quantities of weapons are easily diverted onto the illegal market every year by and for organised crime. The possibility to implement social funding programs should not be an option as a state with weak social policy runs the risk of being more attractive for criminal organisations. ♦

BULGARIA



We start our analysis by focusing on the external factor. As a strength, we consider that Bulgaria has a good number of associations involved in supporting the youth in different fields. On the other side, one of the main weaknesses regards communication of the opportunities. Many initiatives supported by organisations for youth are not very well disseminated, or, if they are, they must ‘compete for public attention’ with many other campaigns and events organised within the same frameworks, thus losing chances to be noticed. In addition, most of the opportunities offered to youth (exchange programs, university collaborations, social projects...) are in the capital, thus leaving the other areas behind. Due to the internal emigration towards the capital, certain regions lack capacities and experts to help the youth with information and support. Moreover, a large number of young people from the country emigrate abroad.

When it comes to opportunities, the first thing to stress is that, from an economic point of view, Bulgaria offers good conditions for new entrepreneurs. A low tax rate and good conditions for registration of a new company make things easier for people who want to start a business. There are also funds and programs that support projects or start-ups for young people. There is not much competition, so it is not very difficult to get the funds, even if the projects are not perfectly written. Moreover, there is facilitated access to information and good practices sharing that can be implemented in Bulgaria through social media or specific websites.

Regarding threats, many young people do not know about the initiatives organised by the EU, especially in rural areas or in smaller towns. They even find it difficult to think, dream, or design something that does not bring a quick result, mainly as income, given the poverty conditions in which they live. That is why many young people start working full-time when they are still studying, and therefore do not have time for anything else. Another threat is that many young people who have good ideas do not know how to implement them step by step and consequently give up.

With all of these considerations, we came to the development of our strategies proposed to tackle these problems. First, it would be crucial to provide a definition of ‘social enterprise,’ to better define the projects actually operating in this area, as the ones connected with social reuse of confiscated assets and guarantee them a more successful path. We also suggest encouraging the media to speak about the confiscated assets and what happens after the confiscation. Currently, it is very difficult to find reliable information about the topic. It would be important to organise events that present and promote youth entrepreneurship and the possibilities offered by the confiscated assets and assure that they are spread all over the country.

Likewise, we suggest organising events, such as round tables, seminars, and mentoring sessions, which link experienced entrepreneurs and youth, both inside and outside of university, to avoid excluding those who do not study. In this way, the young would have examples and tutors to help them out in managing the projects. In order for this to happen, it would be fundamental to also organise training courses for learning how to write projects, as most young people do not have the necessary knowledge.

Finally, it would be important to make the European institutions aware of the lack of links between policies of confiscated assets and support to projects that include their social reuse. If a closer link is established, the processes should go more smoothly and funds arrive faster.

FRANCE



Throughout the analysis that was conducted concerning civil society associations in France, several strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities were identified, as well as some propositions.

Within the strengths is the knowledge of the territory, due to a capillary distribution of associations, as well as the capacity of French civil society associations to hire a high number of people, creating salary work with decent wages. These have been identified as advantages of the current situation. The resources identified are French civic society's high engagement in associations and the fact that all of the biggest French cities have a 'Maison des associations,' providing offices and workspaces to associations of public utility. Policies performing positively at the moment are, for example, harm reduction initiatives, although the highly restrictive French legislation prohibits promotion of the use of illicit drugs. Another example can be seen in the hosting of Ukrainian families and asylum seekers, thanks to the engagement of civil society as well as local institutions who quickly received the European directive as a consequence of the war in Ukraine.

As weaknesses, the field that could be improved records a high level of contradiction within the job role social assistants undertake and the humanitarian missions. This often leads to burnout, especially in large associations such as Le Refuge. A policy that has been identified as underperforming is French institutions' expecting associations to undertake several activities that are usually under the responsibility of public entities. This often leads to associations undertaking tasks that require long-term commitments without being in the position of assuring such services due to specific circumstances, such as financial resources and internal competition within NGOs. Furthermore, most of the French associations experience a strong precarity (in work and in employment) that affects their work.

Within the opportunities, it is believed that NGOs would greatly benefit from an extension in the current legislation. This would allow entrepreneurial economic activity in confiscated assets on top of these assets' social reuse. In addition, the recent introduction of a policy that allows confiscated assets' social reuse can be considered an opportunity for the organisations that can undertake activities and use the confiscated assets.

External threats have been identified in the lack of homogeneity at the national level and in the fact that associations' actions depend on public demand, even in the same fields of action (an example can be seen in assistance to the victims of crime). This inevitably leads to the emergence of a system in which several associations are in competition for economic resources. The fact that associations have found themselves for several years as external providers of public services underlines an ambiguity of role and a possible lack of independence. This has been seen as a practice that negatively affects the current situation. Finally, a trend that threatens the youth, as well as the fight against organised crime, is seen in the prohibitionist legislation with regard to drug use. It is difficult for associations to develop long-lasting actions that aim at reducing the damage presented by exclusion of convicted youth from the workforce. Furthermore, the policy of the figure (politique du chiffre) harms to a higher extent the most vulnerable narcotic consumers with more frequent penal sanctions and attacks

the trust relationship between police and low-income neighbourhoods.

Five proposals have been identified throughout the analysis. First, we consider that there should be efforts to improve AGRASC communication: from public information to publicised information. This would render access to information available and easy to the majority of the population. Second, there should also be an improvement of co-ordination and communication within organisations that work or may work on confiscated assets. Third, a change in the legislation is needed, with the aim of ensuring the possibility of associations NGOs' undertaking fair economy on confiscated assets. Fourth, an improvement is necessary in the amount of confiscated assets that can be used for social purposes (social reuse). And five, public entities must be included within the beneficiary entities with access to confiscated assets on the condition that the assets are used for social reuse. This would decrease and discourage competition within organisations. ♦

GERMANY



The strengths of the SWOT Analysis conducted regarding the German context relate first of all to the strong presence of NGOs and their target audience. These in fact work essentially with a young audience. Many of them particularly target young people in disadvantaged situations. From an institutional point of view, on the other hand, there is a broad strategy to combat unemployment within which is also inscribed the strategy to facilitate training and entry into the world of entrepreneurship. The main state agency assigned to this role is the Job Centres, which are obliged to provide a fast track to all individuals under the age of 25 for access to vocational training or directly to a job. NGOs and Job Centres are excellent potential interlocutors in this regard.

Although there are several funds, both public and private, from which one can apply for financial support to establish a business (which is certainly an opportunity), it is not easy to gain access to them. First, one weakness concerns the criteria by which these funds are disbursed. This can vary from Land to Land. In some national programs, access to the funds is contingent on the wealth of the Land in which the enterprise to be financed is located. In wealthier states, such as Bavaria or Baden-Württemberg, access to funding may even be precluded. In addition, the criteria necessary to be able to apply are thought of in a framework of market economy and profit-driven entrepreneurship, criteria that could hardly be met by a social entrepreneurship entity. This represents, in our analysis, a threat.

However, an opportunity in this regard is provided by the fact that many of the NGOs identified already have direct contact with the world of education (schools, universities, adult education centres), this being the main interlocutor in the national and federal campaign against unemployment (the fast track that Job Centres reserve for the under-25s and NEETs most often aims at placing individuals in specific programs of study). Developing a channel of communication with these realities could be a good way to access some programs. Some of them are also already dedicated to putting schools in direct contact with different types of businesses.

There are funds that place great emphasis on enterprise innovativeness. Given the general context and lack of a culture of social reuse, this could be a strength for one of our projects. The biggest threats are the fact that there is no culture of social reuse in Germany, resulting in a lack of state/legal measures specifically designed for this type of project. In addition, there is no real definition of a young entrepreneur. The adjective ‘young’ refers to the age of the enterprise, not the age of the entrepreneur. Finally, the data on the propensity of young people to start a new business is not encouraging. The pandemic and high energy costs are factors that cause many to fear over-exposure.

Based on the picture made by the SWOT analysis, we have developed different strategies. The first step should be to find a solution to the threats. First, therefore, awareness should be started on the culture of social reuse, the concept of social entrepreneurship, and introduce a more precise definition of youth entrepreneurship. Since the problem arises both at the institutional level and at the level of public opinion, efforts should be made to act on both fronts.

Good interlocutors to contact both institutions and citizens can be the embassies of European countries where there are already laws and examples of social reuse of property confiscated from organised crime, as well as associations that conduct these kinds of initiatives. With them, events aimed at institutional figures and citizens can be organised to begin an awareness campaign made up of public conferences. In parallel, it may be useful to start writing some law proposals as well.

The awareness campaign should then also be extended to schools and universities, not only in the form of conferences, but also workshops and laboratories that can turn into concrete employment possibilities for those who participate. Workshops can aim, for example, at starting a real social enterprise. To do this, it would first be necessary to open a dialogue with NGOs that already work with young people and may be interested in starting a partnership. A partnership with them would allow taking advantage of their experience, both in terms of contacts and ideas/possibilities of action on how to structure a project together. The NGOs can be identified through a list with precise ranking criteria that prioritise the realities to be considered (some criteria could be, for example, what kind of service these NGOs offer to the young people they work with; what is, if any, the target group of young people they address; i.e., whether they are young people in distressed situations or whether they generally address people of a certain age; what contacts they have with institutions).

Another key partner will be the Job Centres, which will be asked to include the workshops among the specialisation paths offered to young job seekers. To find the initial funding needed, reference can be made first to European funds. ♦

ITALY



We start our analysis focusing on the internal aspects and, in particular, in the strengths. Italy has a high presence of CSOs working at local and national level in the youth field. Many of them work in vulnerable contexts, implementing social projects in different fields. From the other side, the research performed has underlined young people's interest in implementing entrepreneurship projects and participating in different related- programme funds.

Another strength revealed in the analysis of the situation of youth and associations working with young people is the implementation of many social cooperatives in confiscated assets. This best practice could help to increase the creation of youth social cooperatives in confiscated assets, giving the community of reference an added value: not only does the community take back a common good, but also the energy of young people can bring new innovation and willingness to operate in their local context. Additionally, among the advantages of using a confiscated property, are zero rental costs, at least in the initial management start-up phase; the social enterprises will cover only utilities. When it comes to weaknesses, the research has underlined that despite the presence of many associations working in the youth field, few CSOs work in labour inclusion in a vulnerable context.

Another point is the need to develop and implement accessible programs for early and later stage entrepreneurs. This aspect has often been underlined by youth, who are mainly supported only during the start-up phase. Another weakness is the lack of dialogue among youth entrepreneurship and public administration as well as the lack of digitalization of their interaction processes (which can also be considered a threat).

Another point is that we have not recorded the existence of youth enterprises in confiscated assets. The two main motivations are, on one side, the fact that confiscated assets are managed by third sector entities,² that is, entities with a social mission; in this framework, the youth enterprises should be with a social purpose. On the other hand, there is a difficulty assigning confiscated assets for social re-use. The calls for the assignment process, both private and public, require certain years of experience in the service offered and an economic sustainability plan, which youth enterprises often do not have.

Regarding opportunities, through the survey we recorded the presence of many national and local funds to support young people and new entrepreneurship projects. We also recorded the existence of school-work experience in the secondary school (among them, the Simulated Training Enterprise methodology) and several university courses to support the creation of new businesses and to enhance young entrepreneurs' competences, particularly in the context of university business hubs.

Another opportunity detected concerning the public and social reuse of confiscated assets is the Transparency Law. Article 48 of the anti-mafia code talks about transparency and many municipalities apply it, publishing all the information related to the confiscation at local level. In this way, young people have the possibility to research where confiscated assets are located in the territory and whether they can be reused.

Another aspect is that the assignee never becomes the owner of a confiscated asset. In this sense, some banks have created special lines of credit – e.g., ethical banks

have ad hoc lines of credit for people who manage confiscated assets. Thanks to this, there is no need for a guarantee on the property. Not being an owner has been overturned from being a threat to be an opportunity, also increasing the possibility of access to confiscated assets.

Finally, the third sector code in Italy has introduced co-planning, which makes it easier to manage the dialogue between institutions and civil society for the management of services and/or spaces.

With regard to threats, the first aspect we would like to stress is that the increase of poverty due to the economic and social crisis does not help the implementation of new enterprises in general and in particular of youth enterprises. This aspect is also exacerbated by excessive bureaucracy and political instability. In Italy, a high percentage of young workers/employees (15–24 years old) receive low wages (29%) and are at risk of poverty (26,6%). Another aspect is the exclusion of vulnerable young people from the funds to start entrepreneurship projects. We have noted the system's high complexity, which brings difficulty in reaching young people living in the most peripheral territory and, at the same time, in managing the large number of youth projects on a local and regional level. Additionally, the Italian NRRP does not have a specific pillar for young people, but a horizontal approach has been adopted, transversely to all sectors. At first glance, this aspect could be considered an opportunity, but the risk is that youth needs are never the focus of a specific political vision; they are marginalised and specific measures are not applied to increasing youth employability and wellbeing. Another relevant aspect regarding youth is the declaration of the European Economic and Social Committee (2021) about the Italian Youth Guarantee program, which is not properly functioning.

In the confiscated assets framework, one threat is failure to apply the transparency law – Article 48 of the anti-mafia code. It is not applied everywhere and uniformly and therefore many municipalities do not know where their confiscated assets are and how they can be reused. Finally, the assignee never becomes the owner of a confiscated asset; e.g., receiving a loan for the restructuring of the property is more complicated because the person does not have a guarantee on the property. All of this information leads us to develop a series of strategies to tackle and face the main weaknesses and threats detected.

First, we consider that there is a need for more data and follow up about the young enterprises created in the framework of national and local funds, lessons learned and best practices.

Second, it is necessary to strengthen the co-project design exchange among CSOs, youth and institutions for improving the young people's role and raising awareness of their needs among Institutions.

Third, it is important to have training courses for both institutions and young people about how to implement social reuse projects; for example, how to launch a call to action that is more accessible to the needs of youngsters and vulnerable people.

Fourth, it is necessary to work on improving the dialogue among local and national In-

stitutions who deal with confiscation. The aim is turning available confiscated assets as soon as possible without a hard and long bureaucracy. This would be fundamental to improve the confiscation process to be able to really use the asset and cut initial costs thanks to the buildings' better condition.

Fifth, there is a need to tackle the transparency problem through the systematic application of art. 48 of Antimafia code to increase data transparency about the confiscated assets at local and national level.

Last, we consider that it would be important to create an activity plan for authorities and institutions to implement the existing tools at national and EU level in 3 different steps:

1. highlighting actions already implemented at National and local level by Institutions and authorities;
2. first degree of increased dissemination; e.g., communication and information on things that already exist;
3. higher level of commitment, to propose new instruments and tools to be applied at local, national and EU level. ♦

MALTA



Different internal and external elements to consider have been detected when analysing the situation in Malta.

When it comes to strengths, the first thing to mention is that many opportunities are available for students at all levels (from primary to tertiary education) in the realm of entrepreneurship, both in terms of mentorship programmes as well as with start-ups. Some of these include the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EU-funded), MCAST (Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology) Entrepreneurship Centre, MITA Innovation Hub (Malta Information Technology Agency), TAKEOFF programme (University of Malta), JA-YE (Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise) Company and Start-Up programmes.

Another interesting point is that, due to Malta's lack of natural resources as well as a dedicated government push in the last decade, there is a strong focus on the development of new economic sectors in Malta. Thus, entrepreneurship in various economic sectors is encouraged and promoted.

On the other hand, the first weaknesses that we'd like to underline is that, despite Malta's focus on entrepreneurship, there remains a lack of an obvious link between governmental assets and their reuse for entrepreneurial purposes, never mind confiscated assets' social reuse from organised crime. While this can be put down to the lack of initiative of certain individuals involved in government on an administrative level, this can be traced back to a culture which tends to lack imagination economically and to isolate and compartmentalise different economic sectors rather than seeing the potential for overlap and collaboration (e.g., the property market with the hospitality industry in terms of the possible integration and support of foreign workers in Malta).

Moreover, the lack of a holistic approach to sustainable economic growth results in economic ventures which too often quickly become limited in their scope and purpose (e.g., the development of a multi-storey block of apartment on the site of a large villa with spacious garden). Such developments, which are often conducted so as to be completed as soon as possible and with little to zero regard for the aesthetic of the surrounding urban and/or rural environment or even the long-term impact such a development may bring with it. Such short-term thinking often is to the detriment of possible projects with a view to the long-term positive social impact on a community.

Last, the low levels of youth unemployment in Malta mean that there is no obvious willingness and high number of Maltese youth who would like to be involved in social enterprise projects that involve a significant element of risk.

When it comes to the opportunities, the first element worth mentioning is the fact that in March 2021, the Justice Ministry announced that it is set to spend €2.5 million on a new futuristic compound in an area of land known as Hal Far to securely store assets recovered from crime. This presents an opportunity in the fight against organised crime in that confiscated assets can now be stored and organised more appropriately and carefully, with greater transparency and accountability as to their presence, use and re-use.

At the same time, the increased and stronger presence of civil society in Malta in the form of groups such as Repubblika, #occupyjustice, Moviment Graffiti, aditus and others in recent years has meant that, with an increased focus on the involvement of organised crime in our daily lives, the Maltese are increasingly aware of assets obtained by organised through illegal means. This has thus brought to the public's attention the need to fight for government confiscation of such assets, which can subsequently lead to a conversation on the possible reuse (both socially and otherwise) of such assets.

The current ongoing criminal cases against actors in the organised crime scene in Malta (e.g., Yorgen Fenech) present an opportunity for the Maltese state to make an example of the confiscation of such assets. Last, many assets owned by such actors in Malta, due to its small size and lack of natural resources, are in the property market. Such assets have quick turn-around potential in that they can quickly and easily be converted and reconvened to suit one purpose or another.

Finally, we come to the analysis of the threats. The first thing to stress is that the current government's (as well as that of future governments) commitment to the fight against organised crime is questionable, with numerous links having surfaced in recent years between well-known politicians and affluent businessmen with clear links with organised crime. This is problematic and presents a serious challenge to the ability of networks such as CHANCE to be able to do its work since the reliability of the owners of such confiscated assets, amidst such questionable behaviour, must be constantly called into question.

Moreover, the culture of corruption, clientelism, nepotism, opportunism and impunity which has dogged the Maltese society and the Maltese political scene incessantly over recent years is a big threat to the possibility of confiscated assets' social reuse from organised crime. This is not a problem caused by a few individuals. This is a societal and cultural issue based on a history whereby such incidents and attitudes have been normalised and embedded within a culture of 'business as usual,' along with a reflexive denial of the suggestion of the mere existence of organised crime in the form of the mafia on the Islands, let alone an acknowledgement of and subsequent tackling of the problem. This is possibly the biggest threat not only to this initiative, but to any initiative with the primary aim of achieving a fairer and more just society.

Also, the fear of market disruption from such a demonstrative intervention by the state here cannot be discounted, with the recent government administration being famed for its classically neoliberal attitude towards the free market, thus making such a radical step quite a departure from traditional policy.

Last, by design, Malta's administrative institutions, bodies and entities have been constructed over a number of decades to have the appearance of efficacy on paper, but to be fundamentally flawed and ineffective in practice. This naturally suits actors who do not have the wider community's interests at heart and thus present a major challenge and threat to any project which prioritises the common good.

Considering all these different elements, we have developed a series of strategic proposals:

1. Conduct an independent review of Malta's asset recovery system and draft recommendations for reform to ensure its effectiveness.
2. Draft and publish a White Paper for wider consultation on the concept of re-allocation of seized assets for social use.
3. Draft and deliver a training program for youth organisations and young activists on social entrepreneurship and potential re-use of confiscated assets.
4. Include social entrepreneurship as a component of entrepreneurship learning in the formal curriculum.
5. Publicise successful pilot projects as models of economic and social compensation to the community seized from criminals.
6. Improve coordination between intelligence and enforcement agencies to target assets held by fronts on behalf of criminals.
7. Introduce publicly resourced co-funding program to support the conversion of assets for social use.
8. Set up a specific unit to manage competitive processes for allocation of assets for social use including oversight by the voluntary sector.
9. Publicly support auditing and financial oversight, as well as support services such as legal, business development, business administration, and financial management in the incubatory stage of new social businesses within re-allocated assets.
10. Delegate oversight of the allocation and oversight of social projects within re-allocated seized assets within the scope of the Commissioner for the Voluntary Sector. ♦

PORTUGAL



The research we underwent suggests that the main strengths regarding the Portuguese youth association panorama are mainly focused on their dynamics. Many organisations are working in the country. A great number of those deal with entrepreneurial initiatives, which in some cases are embedded in partnerships (both at regional and local level) involving bodies like Universities and SMEs. However, the type of initiatives supported correspond to start-ups and business initiatives, they do not necessarily have a social purpose.

We would also like to highlight the strong participation of young people and youth organisations in development of the National Youth Plan (NYP) which has shown interesting results, such as the drive for change and innovation. On the other hand, our youth organisations apparently tend to prefer initiatives that are more focused on working with disadvantaged people, such as NEET, instead of a more general approach. There is a general lack of knowledge about social reuse of confiscated assets.

As for opportunities, we have concluded that youth organisations can apply for various funding programmes and mechanisms. Promotion of entrepreneurship is one of the main trends of those mechanisms, although they tend to be open to the general public and not focused on young people other than higher education students. Several Universities have established Incubators aiming to support the development of business ideas.

Besides the global problems that affect the general population, and especially people with fewer opportunities, such as the ongoing war in Europe and economic and energy crisis, we have collected some more specific opinions that can be considered threats. We have collected information showing that several complaints about problems like the lack of a clear definition of ‘Young people’ or ‘Young Entrepreneur,’ about the difficulty to have access to transparent information (as well as contacts of those responsible for the information) and about the dispersed communication of information directed to young people. On the other hand, in Portuguese legislation, the figure of the social enterprise was included in the Social Economy Basic Law Project. However, when the final diploma version was approved, it was removed from the respective final version, continuing to show a total absence of framework. This makes it very difficult to invest in this area.

Other general conditions also threaten the development of youth initiatives such as many young people’s precarious work conditions, regional or sub-regional inequalities and the general feeling that young people and their interests are under-represented.

In line with these conclusions, we have come up with the following suggestions at international and national level: Creation of an autonomous legal system for social enterprises to promote and facilitate social entrepreneurship; Creation of stronger funding mechanisms for disadvantaged areas; i.e., areas with lower population density; Development of a stronger and more cohesive national strategy to promote young people participation and initiative, and promotion of a platform that would gather information about youth to better enable young people to navigate through the complexity of this quite broad scenario. Regarding youth organisations, we feel that it is necessary to promote a stronger investment in actions and projects about critical thinking, community involvement, participation, and fighting for rights and values of Youth. At last and in a European perspective, we suggest the design of a comprehensive communication campaign to publicise the possibility of social use of confiscated assets. ♦

ROMANIA



Regarding the strengths, Romania has over 100,000 civil society organisations registered in the official register in 2022, but there is scarce information on the number of those really active or the number of youth associations. Nevertheless, many active youth associations and federations across the country participate in local and national policy making and development such as Romanian Youth Council, National Youth Foundations, UN Youth Romania, Romanian Students' Union, National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania, Youth Forum etc. Youth associations are involved in consultations on public policies, especially related to education, labour and environment. For instance, several youth associations published in 2019 a public policy on quality standards for working with young people in Romania³. In the same year, another group of youth CSOs proposed amendments to the youth law⁴. Both projects were supported by EU funds. Youth associations in Romania also participate in EU civil society consortiums. There is a stable legal framework on the organisation of youth associations. Youth organisations extensively use volunteers to implement their activities. According to the 2020 data⁵, half of the young people have participated in volunteer activities in recent years, and around 80% would be willing to participate as volunteers in a CSO. The Erasmus program for young entrepreneurs in Romania has also shown some incredible results, one of them being the fact that Romania is the 3rd (6%) country involved in this program, after Italy (22.33%) and Spain (20.59%) regarding the number of new entrepreneurs. Youth associations have formal and informal partnerships with public institutions. For instance, the Sustainable Development Department of the Romanian Government, cooperation of youth organisations and other civic groups, in 2021 and 2022 developed several local and national level initiatives, such as Sustainable Development Week⁶ and Bucharest International Student Model United Nations.⁷

Regarding the weaknesses, youth associations seem isolated. The cooperation among associations is insufficient to sustainably influence the decision-making process. Youth associations lack knowledge about social economy and social reuse of confiscated assets, but also about the EU decision making process and opportunities to be involved. The number of associations focused on crime prevention and reduction is small. Also, only a small number of associations are focused on promoting entrepreneurship. Generally, youth associations lack enough administrative capacity to implement large projects.

Regarding opportunities, youth associations have multiple financing opportunities (European funds, ERASMUS, national funds, also local authorities' funds based on Law 350/2005, and business sector and corporate grants). Youth associations may receive EU structural funds from the operational programs to develop entrepreneurship mentoring and finance new entrepreneurial initiatives. For instance, the Government launched several grant schemes to promote youth entrepreneurship among NEETS, grants for young farmers and a grant scheme entitled 'Start UP Nation' that had three editions already. In 2021, Romania adopted the new National Employment Strategy 2021–2027. According to the Employment Strategy, new measures to reduce unemployment among young people are proposed, such as provision of responsible entrepreneurial support programs tailored to the needs of different target groups, with a focus on disadvantaged people, including pre-start-up measures and start-up grant schemes. Youth associations may receive support from County Youth Direc-

tions of the Government. The Economic and Social Council also established a special committee to map the challenges of the youth sector.⁸ The Government must prepare a new youth strategy. In 2022, a new social reuse legislation was passed that allows legal education and crime prevention projects to be financed by money confiscated from crime.

Regarding threats, youth associations may find themselves lost in the complicated legal framework on accessing EU structural funds. Because of the youth organisations' low administrative capacity, there is a risk of not being able to implement such projects. The general economic and security context (inflation, war etc.) in Romania induce further risks to youth organisations. Youth organisations also risk losing their independence, especially in relations with political parties.

Based on the research and results of the SWOT analysis, we have developed a country specific recommendation. Firstly, Romania needs a new youth strategy. The previous youth strategy concluded in 2020 and an evaluation is needed to build on the results already achieved. This recommendation is also a priority for youth organisations to be able to be strategically involved at local and national level. The new strategy should ensure adequate financial support to youth organisations and create the framework for enhanced partnerships and dialogue between youth organisations and public entities. Secondly, youth organisations must be horizontally mentioned and involved in other sectoral strategies such as National Recovery and Resilience Plan and Employment Strategy, including Youth Guarantee implementation. Thirdly, youth organisations must be part of the national consultations on confiscated assets' social reuse and must participate in the National Crime Prevention Mechanism. ♦

SPAIN



Analysing and drawing conclusions about Spanish associations working with young people, in particular focused on social reuse and youth entrepreneurship, is not a simple task. There is a very wide and heterogeneous range of associations with different characteristics, facing different realities, which makes the task difficult. However, we believe that there are common aspects that unite these different entities, which makes it possible to make a rapprochement.

We thus begin by analysing the internal factors that characterise Spanish associations and, in particular, their strengths. The first thing we have detected is that a large number of organisations are working in the territory in social justice projects. This creates a network of active organisations that can support each other, creating ‘social muscle’ that facilitates these associations’ work. Besides this, another strength is that there are examples of well-functioning projects of social reuse of confiscated assets that can serve as an example for associations that want to start new initiatives.

However, the Spanish associations also have different weaknesses that make their work harder. First, they find difficulties when communicating with their target groups and transmitting the importance of the projects they implement, which leads to a lack of public knowledge of social reuse projects, especially if we compare it with other countries. Besides this, we have detected that they are also failing to provide proper training programs for youth entrepreneurs. In particular, there is a lack of programs focused specifically on the youth entrepreneur, as well as lack of mentoring programs or funding programs focused on this figure.

When it comes to the external factors, there are different aspects to consider when analysing the situation of Spanish associations. If we focus on the opportunities, the first thing that we would like to stress is the highly educated Spanish youth population (39.7% of Spanish youth completed a higher education cycle) who can support the associations in their work. Connected with this is the fact that the Spanish civic society has historically shown its active support for social inclusion and integration projects and programs, which leads to a higher level of support to the associations’ work. Besides this, we underlined the favourable Spanish and European legislations which allow the confiscation of assets and their social reuse. When it comes to the specific target group of the young entrepreneurs, we have detected different European programs focused on their training. There are also national programs focused on training entrepreneurs, but these ones are focused on general ones, not just the young ones.

However, when analysing the external factors, we also spotted different threats. The first aspect we focused on was the existing social reuse projects and their functioning. This is because, if the existing social reuse of confiscated assets programs do not work or are not properly supported by society, authorities may decide to stop dedicating these assets for these purposes. This is connected to the problems associations have with transmitting what they do for their target groups, but also to an increasing glorification and praising of criminal culture spread among young people, which can discourage them from getting involved in these kinds of initiatives. Lastly, we also stressed different factors connected to the socioeconomic situation. The country’s high rates of youth unemployment constitute a risk, with its consequent socio-economic instability. This, connected to the possibility of worsening economic

situations due to the effects of geopolitical movements, can have strong negative effects on young entrepreneurs, making it even harder for them to start new projects.

Thus, and considering all the above factors, we made five proposals that could improve the situation of Spanish associations. The first one is the creation and strengthening of a network of associations working on confiscated assets' social reuse that can support each other. It would also be interesting to create a mutual support fund within this network to give a small initial financial support to new projects. We also consider that associations can do a lot when it comes to training and supporting new entrepreneurs. That is why we propose the creation and implementation of training and mentoring programs for young entrepreneurs, and also the creation of awareness-raising programs focused on the importance of entrepreneurship to be implemented at an early age (starting from middle school). Last but not least, we would also like to tackle the communication problems that associations are facing. That is why we propose the development of campaigns to inform, attract and recruit potential young entrepreneurs willing to collaborate in projects for confiscated assets' social reuse. ■

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- 1 Agjencia Kombëtare e Rinisë. Source: <http://rinia.gov.al/>
 - 2 Pursuant to Italian law, a Third Sector Organization or Ente del Terzo Settore (ETS) is a not-for-profit private organisation or entity that pursues civic, solidarity and social benefits purposes conducting, exclusively or principally, activities of general interest in an accountable and transparent way. The Code of the Third Sector (Legislative Decree No. 117 of 3 July 2017) introduced a common definition for not-for-profit organisations such as associations, foundations, social enterprises, philanthropic entities, and voluntary organisations, which are now all considered 'Entities of the Third Sector.'
 - 3 Quality standards for the working with young people in Romania: <https://www.standarde-tineret.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Propunere-Politica-Publica.pdf>
 - 4 Tools for strengthening the structured dialogue in public policies in the field of youth – ACTIVE – ONGT: <https://ctr.ro/tinerii-cer-strategii-pentru-tineret-la-nivel-national-si-local/>
 - 5 Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2020 – http://mts.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/IRES_DIAGNOZA-2020-_raport-final-MTS.pdf
 - 6 The Department for Sustainable Development, this year's promoter of the European Sustainable Development Week! – <https://gov.ro/ro/media/comunicate/departamentul-pentru-dezvoltare-durabila-promotor-i-anul-acesta-al-saptamanii-europene-a-dezvoltarii-durabile&page=122>
 - 7 Bucharest International Student Model United Nations: <https://www.agerpres.ro/comunicate/2022/09/26/comunicat-de-presa-departamentul-pentru-dezvoltare-durabila--985280>
 - 8 The temporary specialised commission for the study on the theme 'Youth, policies and European programs for youth and young people in Romania, in the context of the declaration to the European Commission of the year 2022 European Year of Youth.'

Conclusion

Boosting social economy youth entrepreneurship project within confiscated assets from organised crime as a means for local and sustainable economic development.

Social economy, unlike classical economy, aims to develop economic activities that produce goods or services. However, it differs from the latter in its purpose, which is the community's interest, strengthening of social cohesion and sustainable development. Social Economy enterprises and organisations, being deeply rooted in civil society and driven by a strong social commitment, are able to offer innovative solutions to the main economic, social and environmental challenges of our time. It has also been demonstrated that they are better able to withstand and navigate global economic crises and show some resilience to economic fluctuations.¹ One of the social economy's objectives is to boost social projects that contribute to local economic development in a sustainable way by promoting social enterprises and increasing turnover and employment in the participating areas.

Social economy and sustainable development share the same vision of the economy. If the social economy seems an obvious framework and one of the possible ways of implementing sustainable development, it has become clear that sustainable development can more than ever offer a mode of development, unify and 'make visible' this alternative economy. Sustainable development refers to society's ability to 'meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (United Nations, 1992).² In this context, it is becoming increasingly urgent for young people to understand and take the initiative to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and be the driving force behind solutions. But how do we enable young people to contribute to these alternative economic development models? How can we include especially those young people who belong to the marginalised segments of the population?

The challenge today is therefore to succeed in strengthening youth social projects in the social economy as an indispensable means for local and sustainable economic development. Nowadays, we can say that throughout Europe, where young people have fewer opportunities for education, professional growth and cultural development, there are fewer opportunities for them to contribute to the region's cultural, social and economic growth. Fortunately, the youth of Europe always prove to be aware of and responsive to the challenges of our time, despite the fact that continuous crises (COVID-19, war, climate crisis, etc.) confront these young people with an increasingly uncertain future.

It is therefore necessary to come up once again with new solutions that respond to the need to reuse resources, which the climate crisis requires us to address, and to the need to help society through the development of a healthier economic model. In this context, it seems more than evident that the reuse for social purposes of assets confiscated from mafias and criminal organisations can play an important role in the future to promote youth entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship projects within confiscated properties, especially if promoted for young people, launch an important message of societal redemption. There is not only the recovery of existing resources but also the possibility of giving back to society what the mafias, ecomafias, corruption and criminal organisations have taken away from it. Given that young people are the cross-section of society from whom the most has been taken, these mafias' damage will have very serious repercussions on their future. It seems to us even more incumbent to offer these young people a sustainable, economically viable alternative, that at the same time, is a strong and clear message.

A change in society cannot be separated from a change in the economic and development model. If we want to eradicate poverty, the marginalisation of the weakest segments of society, we must promote good practices and defeat the old systems of power, especially criminal, which pollute our society, economy, land and democracy. ■

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- 1 Viviani, M. (December 1st 2021). *Les entreprises de l'Économie sociale et solidaire sont plus résilientes face à la crise sanitaire et l'instabilité économique*. Published in Financité. Retrieved on November 10th 2022 from <https://www.financite.be/fr/reference/les-entreprises-de-leconomie-sociale-et-solidaire-sont-plus-resilientes-face-la-crise>
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 - 2 United Nations Brundtland Commission (1987). *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. Retrieved on November 10th 2022 from <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

