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SOCENT SPAs

Interreg Europe

SOCENT SPAs improves the effectiveness of regional policies in sparsely populated areas to actively support social economy and social entrepreneurs as a driver to regional competitiveness and inclusive growth

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**SME
competitiveness**



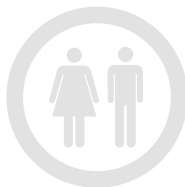
European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

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What SocentSPAs is?

SOCENT SPAs is fostering interregional cooperation among six public/private entities of Finland, Germany, Slovakia and Spain in a view to improve the effectiveness of regional policies in actively supporting the visibility, incubation and acceleration of social entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas (SPAs) as a driver to regional competitiveness and inclusive growth.

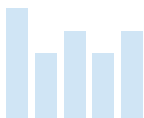
A particular challenge

In SPAs, demographic trends are a particular challenge. As counter-measure, social innovation needs to be developed to promote employment and competitiveness as it can make a real difference as a source of innovative approaches for resolving societal challenges through mobilizing civil society to further inclusive socioeconomic development. Social Enterprises (SEs) directly benefit local development and correct major socioeconomic imbalances while benefiting local communities, a crucial asset to secure the population in SPAs. However, bespoke support for SEs is limited; policymakers can play a significant role by setting up the right legal framework.

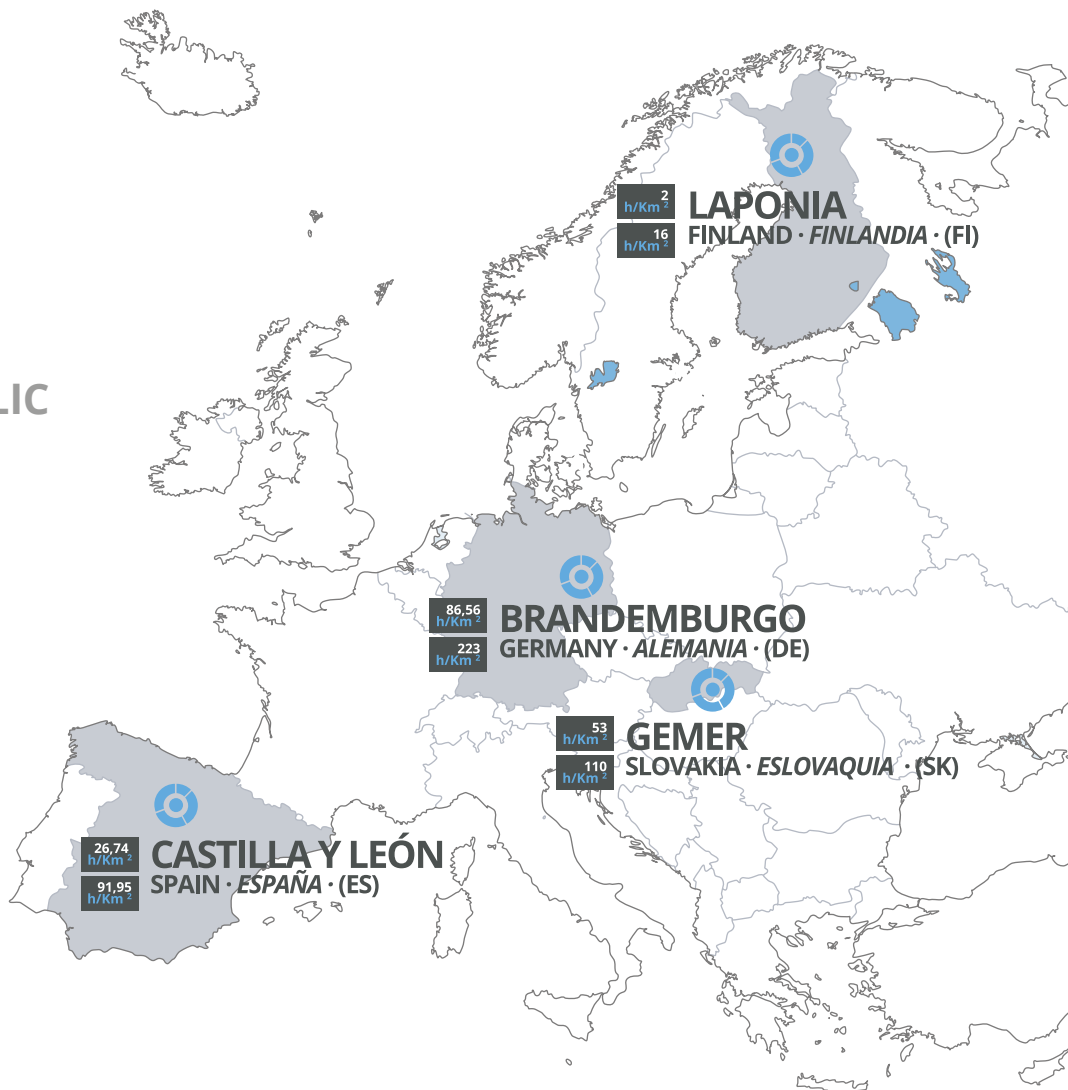
SOCENT SPAs

Interreg Europe

DEUTSCHLAND
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
SPAIN
FINLAND



TOPIC
SME competitiveness



Interregional exchange of knowledge

Thus, to influence policies in a view to enhance SEs' visibility and competitiveness whilst taking into account SPAs' conditions, interregional exchange of knowledge and successful experiences/good practices are fundamental. With an integrated approach, a comprehensive learning process based on identification, analysis and transfer will be implemented through workshops, site visits and meetings with stakeholders. Based on the learning acquired, action plans aiming at integrating SEs in SPAs support schemes into policies will be developed. Communication will play a crucial role in supporting the action.

Four implemented action plans

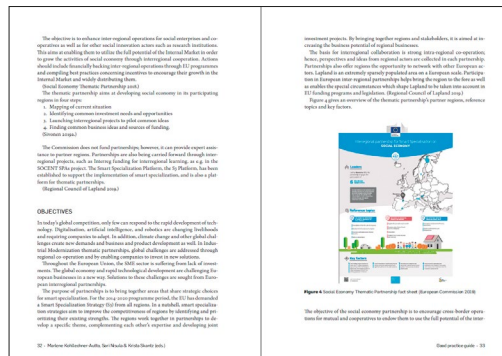
The main outputs will be a best practices guide for SEs in SPAs and 4 implemented action plans to promote the SEs in SPAs. The main results is being policymakers' awareness raised on SEs as a driver to inclusive growth and their capacities increased in identifying SEs' needs and addressing these adequately in their policies to create an enabling legal environment for SEs.

Good practice guide

We have elaborated a 'Good practice guide. Strategies supporting social enterprises, and concrete examples of social innovation and social enterprises from sparsely populated European regions'.

Hence, this publication aims at providing good practice examples of social enterprises, their supporting strategies as well as social innovations for regional developers and policy makers of sparsely populated areas. In this publication, good practices from four different sparsely populated areas are discussed: Castile and León (Spain), Gemer (Slovakia), Brandenburg (Germany) and Lapland (Finland). The publication should act as a source of inspiration to other regions facing similar challenges. It shows that even in the most sparsely populated areas good examples of innovative, ground-breaking initiatives can flourish.

Jesús Rodríguez Rodríguez General Directorate for Social Economy and Self-Employed Persons Regional Government of Castile and León.



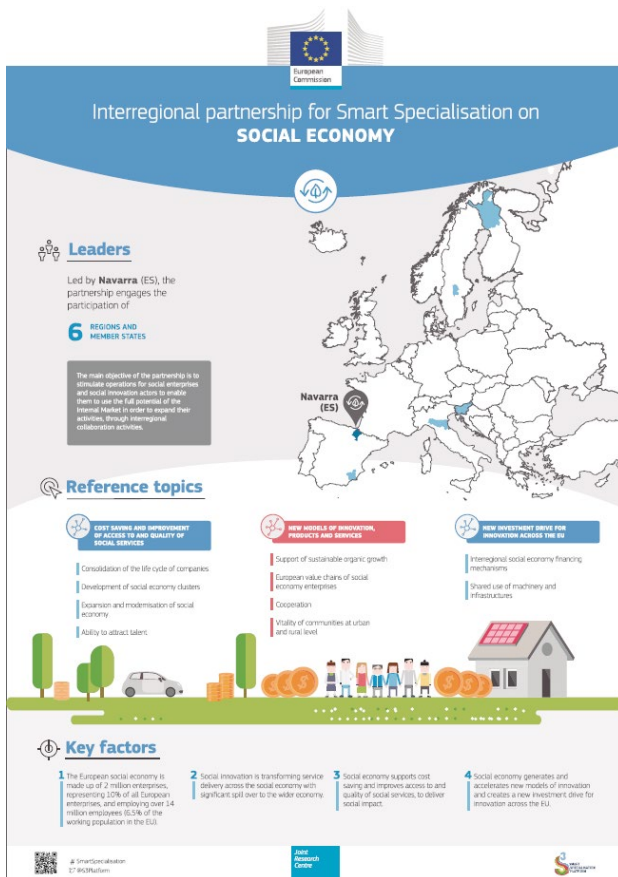


Some good examples: **kombiBUS (Brandenburg)**

Demographic changes pose a major challenge to sparsely populated areas (SPAs). As a consequence, infrastructure must be reorganized to permanently maintain the quality of life in rural communities. As a key infrastructure, public transport ensures the general mobility and social participation. To this end, public transportation systems in rural areas need to increasingly adjust to novel circumstances through enhancing their efficiency and/or developing innovative approaches. Such new approaches increase efficiency and help reduce costs. As a reaction to similar developments in its region, Brandenburg's Uckermark region implemented the public-private-partnership project, the kombiBUS. Since its inception in 2012, such "combination buses" are allowed to transport not only passengers from A to B, but also goods. This enables local manufacturers of goods to ship their produce to a wider net of locations and customers. Incidentally, the regional economy is connecting itself and giving impetus to domestic value creation as well.



Some good examples: **Social Economy Thematic Partnership. Spain**



The objective of the Social Economy Thematic Partnership is to create European value chains of social economy enterprises belonging to different regions. Lead region: Navarra, Spain.

Official partner regions: Emilia Romagna, Italy. Murcia, Spain. Örebro, Sweden. Lapland, Finland. Slovenia.

The social economy sector plays an important part in bringing innovative partners together across the region. The partnership has the ambition to take the lead and further explore how this model of S3 engagement with the social economy sector could be scaled up with other EU partner regions of a similar ambition. This desire to create S3-oriented, inter-regional collaboration for the social economy sector offers great potential to generate joint EU efforts across the sector and to implement new approaches to innovation, entrepreneurship and inclusive growth throughout the EU.

Some good examples:
***Social Integration Enterprise in the
Municipality of Gemer***

Social entrepreneurship is an innovative instrument aimed at addressing various societal problems through the implementation of business principles. Given that social entrepreneurship is a new phenomenon in the Slovak environment, it has not been properly explored. Lack of information and data causes problems in understanding the challenges social enterprises face while pursuing their objectives, how they function, what activities they engage in, and what public policy measures may be of use to the operation of existing social enterprises and the creation of new ones. As a result, the potential of social enterprises to address various societal problems remains untapped. Nevertheless, there are some entities in the region willing to engage in social entrepreneurship to resolve societal and community problems. This is evidenced by the example of the municipality of Gemer that decided to set up a municipal pasta-making company and thus tackle the most serious problems facing the least developed regions: high unemployment rate.



Some good examples:
***Supporting regional development through social inclusion and ecological innovation:
Lobetaler Bio. Brandebourg***

The social enterprise Lobetaler Bio's mission is the pursuit of a so-called "Social Milk Economy". Therein, Lobetaler Bio, an organic dairy product manufacturer and innovator, reconciles two main concerns in its social business model: First, the employment and support of handicapped people and second, the development and placement of new ecologically sustainable products in the competitive organic food market.

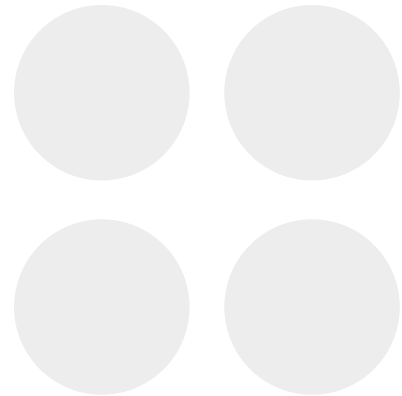


Some good examples:

Social enterprise Uurto cooperative, Finish Lapland

In this article, we take a look at an inspiring social enterprise from Kemijärvi, Finnish Lapland. The voice of Pirjo Lehtola, Managing Director of the cooperative Uurto is heard through the article discussing issues of employment, social enterprising and public procurements.

The purpose of this article is to increase the knowledge of practical tools and models for social enterprises in Lapland. The knowledge will be spread through the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt with the international partners in The SOCENT SPA project.



Some good examples:

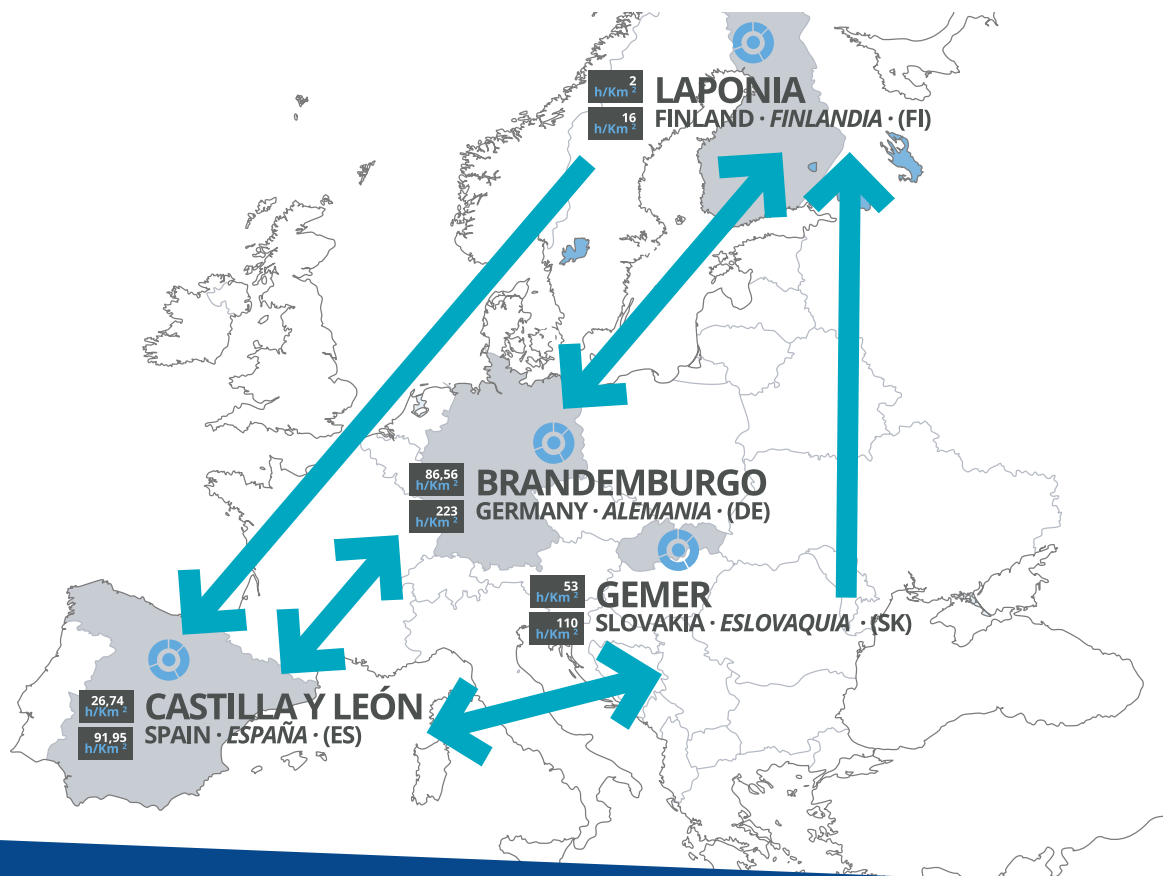
LA EXCLUSIVA Social logistics, Castile and Leon, Spain

The social entrepreneurship “La Exclusiva”, based in Soria, is in charge of the home delivery of food and other products and services (procedures with public administrations, press, dry cleaning, catering, housing rehabilitation, legal services, etc.) in the most isolated and sparsely populated areas of the province of Soria and Burgos, through 6 routes, spread over 4 days, with a weekly frequency, serving a total clientele of more than 15.000 families in an innovative way. La Exclusiva negotiates with their suppliers so that the final cost of the product and/or service for the beneficiary is the same as if it were purchased in the capital city and it is the supplier who covers the cost of La Exclusiva's service through a percentage of the total sales volume.



Eight bilateral visits

- UAS (Germany and Spain)
- SI (Finland and Spain)
- EPIC/MoSALF (Finland and Spain)
- Junta of Castile and León/Cives Mundi (Slovakia and Germany)



Eight bilateral visits *Spain*

On May, we have spent two intense days in Valdeavellano de Tera and El Burgo de Osma working in a tailor-made and modular qualification programme for social business consultants in Sparsely Populated areas.



Eight bilateral visits *Finland*

The Lapin AMK - Lapland University of Applied Sciences hosted another bilateral visit in the frame of the Interreg Europe #SOCENTSPAs project on the 7th and the 8th of May 2019 for project partners from Slovakia. The topic of the bilateral visit was work integration and rehabilitation.



Eight bilateral visits Slovakia

At the beginning of April, Slovakia and Spain held a bilateral meeting in Bratislava, with very interesting visits to Nová Cvernovka, Radnička or BIVIO. The objective of the bilateral visit was to deepen the knowledge on legal framework for social economy in Slovakia, that has been in place since May 2018, the financial instruments for social enterprises, and approaches to social impact measurement. These aspects of the law were introduced by project partner MoLSFA, which is also the key regulator for the field of social economy in Slovakia.



Eight bilateral visits *Other visits*

Last week our colleague of Social Impact, Florian Birk, participated in the international cooperation forum #europecooperates!, an Interreg Europe event held in Brussels, from 9 to 11 April, with the attendance of more than 500 people. A very well organized and interesting event and a good opportunity to catch up with some colleagues from other projects.



Project Partners

**General Directorate for Social Economy and
Self-Employed Persons - Regional Government of Castile and León (ES)**

NGOD Cives Mundi (ES)

Social Impact (DE)

Lapland University of Applied Sciences (FI)

Not-for-profit organization EPIC (SK)

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (SK)



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