

SEEDING

Social Economy Enterprises addressing
Digitalisation, Industrial Relations and the European Pillar of Social Rights

Third transnational online workshop

Wednesday 29 July 2020 (10:30-12:00 CET)

Zoom meeting

NOTES

The last in the first series of online events in the Seeding project took place on 29 July 2020 on Zoom. On this occasion, around 25 people had registered and around 15 people attended the online meeting. This meeting focused on Italy and Spain.

Melinda Kelemen (project manager, DIESIS) welcomed the audience and gave a brief overview of the recent project activities – on the background report and case studies published online.

Feliciano Iudicone (researcher, FGB), on behalf of the research partner FGB, said a few words about why these cases were selected for the project. Doc Servizi has been trying to find an answer to the instability of employment and of income faced by artists and entertainment workers since before the rise of the gig economy. The interesting feature of Doc Servizi is that it uses the model of the platform business a bit differently: while many platforms consider workers as self-employed and use algorithms to organise their work, Doc Servizi gives much independence to workers but sticks to the employment status (usually casual employment). Som Mobilitat is a mobility platform to share cars. Environmental and financial aspects answering the needs of workers in their capacity as commuters also make this case interesting. Suara is an example of how the focus of digital innovation can be on training rather than on digital tools themselves, and at the same time provides interesting inputs for public procurement, as the company provides outsourced public services.

From Italy one of the four case studies, Doc Servizi, was presented by **Francesca Martinelli** (Institutional Communications and International Relations, Doc Servizi). Doc Servizi is a network of artists, musicians and technicians working in cultural and creative businesses and has 8,400 members. According to the provisions of Italian law, members of workers' cooperatives have a double relationship with the cooperative, one as owners of the company and the other as employees or self-employed workers. At Doc Servizi, the members are usually enrolled as employees while having some autonomy in the organisation of their activities and sharing some costs like promotional and development activities. Doc Servizi provides its members with innovative tools (e.g. marketplace, training) for self-management. The members are connected through a highly digitalised and technical platform which is rather different from the usual platforms – which is why it calls itself a “self-management cooperative”. The cooperative is also a tool for members to achieve representation. As a result, Doc Servizi supports negotiations for sectoral collective agreements, and brings forward proposals to better protect entertainment workers and freelancers. For instance, during Covid-19, it also lobbied that on-call workers in show business should be entitled to receive income support benefits. Ms Martinelli also talked about the concept of the ‘Pegasus’ company, a company that, like Doc Servizi, while placing workers at the centre of its action, strives to improve the rights and working conditions of a professional category as a whole, taking over some typical interest representation activities.

Q. 1: How did the collective bargaining process happen?

A. 1: Everything started in 2011 with a stage technician's death. All stakeholders including the trade unions were called to discuss the need for a collective agreement to better protect these workers. Although it was signed by the social partners, Doc Servizi provided the expertise necessary to define occupations and tasks in the agreement as well as the related aspects concerning work organisation and working conditions. The three largest unions signed the agreement, which is now applicable to about 20,000 people who work in the cooperative sector in this field.

From Spain, two of the four cases were presented at the event. First, **Angel Matilla** (Som Mobilitat) introduced Som Mobilitat. The cooperative was established four years ago following a **renewable energy**

cooperative model (Som Energia) in Catalonia. The main reason is to help the transition to sustainable mobility. Som Mobilitat also aims to make people aware of sustainable means of travel, such as bicycle, electrical vehicles and shared transport, in urban settings. Part of this plan is to offer not only services but also training and workshops. In Som Mobilitat, vehicles are bought collectively by local communities. A platform cooperative was chosen for shared electric mobility because it best suited the needs: upscaling, resource optimisation, reducing costs and ease of use. Mr Matilla also presented how to use the service, e.g. picking up a vehicle, checking availability, battery charging and cleaning. The vehicles are not financed from public sources, but mainly by the people who use them and the network members. The cars are owned by the cooperative. City councils and companies use these cars as well. Som Mobilitat operates in Catalonia only to keep it simple but the cooperative is part of a wider European network. The Mobility Factory SCE makes it possible for other interested parties to join the network and share resources. Eleven cooperatives participate in the network. The web application is customised by each partner, while the management control system is shared. The IT tools are developed by the network. Som Mobilitat together with Partago (another coop in Belgium) started in 2016 with 10 cars, and by 2020 the Mobility Factory and its 11 cooperatives are operating 169 cars. By 2022 the estimate is 500 cars distributed among 60 cooperatives throughout Europe.

Q. 1: How do you clean the cars during the Covid crisis?

A. 1: The service had to stop at one point. Now it has restarted, disinfectant is provided and the members (users) are asked to disinfect the surfaces before and after using a vehicle.

Q. 2: What is the proportion of members and employees and what is the difference in the decision-making?

A. 2: The core staff is 10 people (four of them working full-time). In each municipality there are at least two members who are not staff, but who offer their time in exchange for some mobility hours. They take care of urgent matters like maintenance. Som Mobilitat has just under 2,000 members but some of them are not users, but just support the concept. Decision-making is carried out through the general meeting and an

elected council. The strategy is decided by the core staff, and the general meeting decides on general and non-urgent matters following the one member-one vote principle regardless of worker or member status.

Q. 3: Does the cooperative operate in low-populated areas?

A. 3: Yes, and we are very proud of this. Everyone has their own challenges. This also makes Som Mobilitat a social movement.

The second Spanish case was introduced by **Jordi Picas I Vilà** (Director of innovation, Suara Cooperative). Suara is a non-profit organisation with 35 years of experience in the social and personal welfare field. It has a nine-member governing board. The governance model is based on direct participation. Suara has members and workers (not all workers are members). Suara offers various care services, most being provided in Catalonia. 80% of the services are public services. After the crisis in 2007, investment was made in the personal services sector and competition got tougher. In 2014-2018 the strategic plan defined digitalisation as a key priority. Suara had to stay alive in the high-competition environment that made the transformation necessary. In 2015 a change management process was approved and all members and workers had the opportunity to take part in it and feel comfortable with the issue.

External consultants were involved. The establishment of Suara Lab provided and facilitated innovation for the company. In 2018 a digitalisation office was established with the participation of eight department directors. Information technology, new communication channels and a platform for online participation were introduced. The challenge for 2020 is to launch a digital platform. The aim is also to improve services for consumers. Recently a start-up entered the market, which also makes Suara interested in innovations.

Covid-19 accelerated the digital transformation, and Suara introduced a coronavirus online psychological support site. The digital transformation helped to maintain jobs and attract young people, and to improve services and the quality of the care. The workers are trained to use the new modern tools, which meant that telework spread more and work-life balance improved. Big corporations with better financial tools and

resistance toward change are the biggest threats. Suara sees the importance of working together with trade unions.

Q. 1: An early slide showed income and social value or impact. How can these be presented and who can present them? Did it make any difference?

A. 1: Suara used a scientific method taken from Dr José Luis Retolaza at the University of Deusto to show the administration how high the social impact of the services is, and what their added value is. We had to show what the services mean, and we had to be different.

Q. 2: Is it a marketplace for Suara's services or a platform for the workers?

A. 2: Now we are trying only. This is not a marketplace. We want to have a digital platform cooperative for the members, workers and owners. Doc Servizi is an example that helps us to understand how it could work.

Q. 3: You mention there was job instability without lay-offs. What does that mean? Secondly, if workers and consumers are going to be members, are there any special arrangements as to how they vote?

A. 3: The answer to the first question is that despite all the difficulties we have kept the people working full-time, and there were no layoffs. We wanted to keep our members and workers. Regarding the second question, we are not a consumer cooperative, so we provide services as members and workers. We do not yet know whether the future digital platform will be only for members and workers, or for consumers as well. In Catalonia, the law is not really clear, and we are still thinking about this.

Remark from **Som Mobilitat**:

Som Mobilitat is a consumer service; we offer services and have agreements, so it is possible in Catalonia.

Melinda Kelemen gave a short summary of the event. The next series of workshops will probably be organised during the autumn of 2020.

21 September 2020