

HANDBOOK

# THE SOCIAL & SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Identifying and supporting rural social innovations to reinvent the local economy.



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# EDITORIAL

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) and the local, socially conscious solutions it contributes are among the keys to inclusive development in rural communities. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the SSE's benefits in terms of maintaining social ties and the essential activities of daily life.

Supporting, facilitating, and improving residents' access to healthcare, services, mobility, culture, and jobs are the main objectives of the French Rural Agenda, which has become more relevant than ever. All of these factors contribute to improving local residents' living environment and to economic resiliency, which is now in high demand.

By taking part in the TRESSONS (Rural Communities and the SSE, Tools and New Synergies) project led by Avise and the RTES (Network of Local Governments for a Solidarity Economy), the ANCT, France's national social cohesion agency, is diving deeper into the conditions required for the SSE to expand and into its benefits for rural communities in order to better support local governments as they strive to create regional momentum strong enough to take on the challenges of the multiple transitions faced by today's society, including ageing, integrating people excluded from the job market and decreasing their carbon footprint by using local resources.

The TRESSONS project is a timely complement to the work done by the ANCT, particularly with regard to the conditions for stabilising SSE activities in all the communities where it operates (priority neighbourhoods under the urban policy, small and mid-sized towns, and industrial, mountain, and rural areas).

The wealth of initiative in rural communities is well-known. This handbook highlights the SSE's relatively large presence in rural communities and offers a detailed description of how it operates, confirming that the SSE, with its local focus, is indeed one of the positive solutions to the multiple crises we now face, as the French Ministry for Social Cohesion and Relations with Local Government and its counterparts and partners have indicated. The SSE, with its regulatory framework, its local connections, and its guiding principles, makes it possible to offer residents both basic services and new solutions that include their communities in the transition process, in areas where market intervention is very limited due to low population density and solvency.

## **Yves Le Breton,**

GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE ANCT

*“The SSE, with its regulatory framework, its local connections, and its guiding principles, makes it possible to offer residents both basic services and new solutions that include their communities in the transition process, in areas where market intervention is very limited due to low population density and solvency.”*

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# THE FUTURE OF RURAL COMMUNITIES WILL BE SOCIAL AND SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

Are you keen to make a difference in rural communities? To help them stay vibrant and encourage more collaborative, inclusive, eco-friendly practices in rural areas? The social and solidarity economy (SSE) offers a response to these challenges and plays a vital role in local communities' development and social cohesion.

SSE enterprises develop goods and services that are relevant to residents, create local jobs, and contribute to the movement towards a more socially conscious, eco-friendly, and civic-minded society that increases the appeal of rural communities.

Community shops, communal gardens, community currencies, digital inclusion projects, work integration organisations and training services for the disadvantaged, sustainable mobility alternatives, upcycle centres, circular economy and short food supply chain initiatives... The SSE has plenty of innovative solutions on offer!

Whether you are a public- or private-sector stakeholder, you have a multitude of options to boost social innovation in rural areas.

This Handbook contains the keys to understanding how the SSE benefits local development and how you can support SSE enterprises to amplify their social impact and accelerate the transition to a more resilient, more socially-conscious, more eco-friendly future for your communities.

# WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

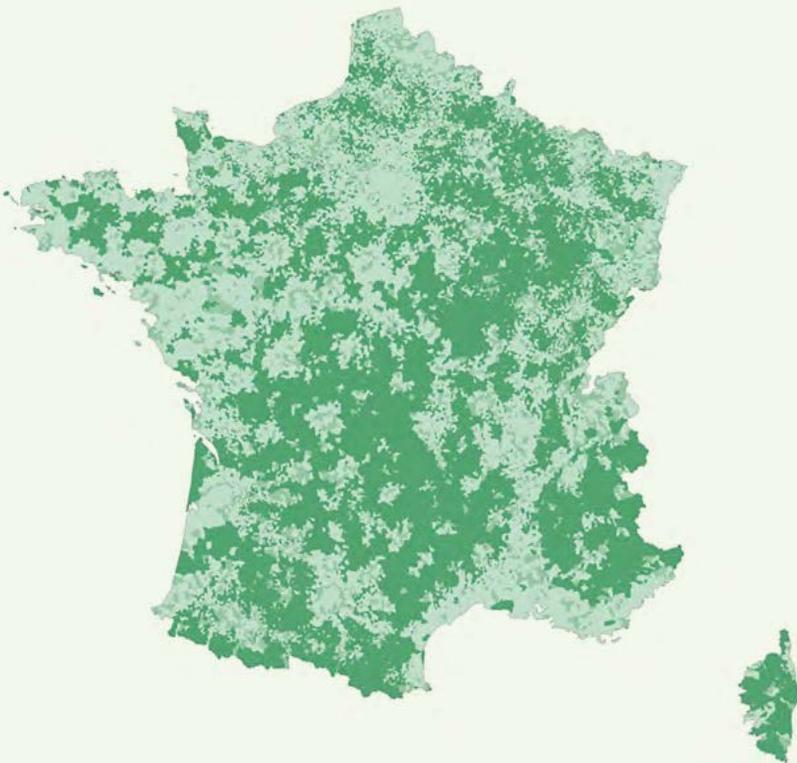
In rural communities, with their highly diverse socio-economic realities, the solutions advanced by the SSE and social innovators aim to provide a sustainable response to the major challenges we face today.

## RURAL COMMUNITIES IN FRANCE

In their 2019<sup>1</sup> study, Avise, the RTES, and the National SSE Observatory of the CNCRESS (National Council of Regional SSE Chambers) defined French rural spaces using an approach that classified low-density and very low-density municipalities in which the majority of the active population does not work in an urban area as rural. The quantitative data provided in this Handbook is taken from that study.

### Low-density municipalities with few urban ties

Source: IGN Géofla 2015, INSEE Census



1. The method used is discussed in detail in the study *L'économie sociale et solidaire dans les territoires ruraux*, Avise, RTES, Observatoire national de l'ESS du CNCRESS, June 2019

## THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (SSE)

The social and solidarity economy (SSE), officially recognised in France by the Social and Solidarity Economy Act of 31 July 2014, is an approach to business used by organisations seeking to reconcile the aims of serving society, achieving a viable business model, democratic governance, and profitability in support of their social purpose. SSE enterprises, which operate in all sectors of the economy, can take different legal forms: non-profits, cooperatives, mutual companies, foundations, or social enterprises with trade status.

They aim to respond to local socio-economic and environmental challenges while creating sustainable jobs that are safe from relocation and increasing social cohesion. They are founded on a social purpose expressed through their operations, their employees, their customers and beneficiaries, or their structure.



### 6.3 million residents

9.9% of the population of Metropolitan France



### 15,960 municipalities

45.2% of all municipalities in Metropolitan France

## SOCIAL INNOVATION

“Social innovation consists in developing new solutions to address new or inadequately met social needs within existing market and social policy conditions, involving the participation and cooperation of the players concerned, particularly users and consumers. These innovations concern the product or service, as well as the mode of organisation, distribution, (etc.). They go through a multi-step process: emergence, experimentation, dissemination, evaluation.”

*Definition by the French Council for the Social and Solidarity Economy, December 2011.*

# THE SSE: SUSTAINABLE LOCAL ACTIVITIES AND JOBS

In rural areas, a large share of jobs in the economic sectors that will be key to these regions' future are concentrated in the SSE, fostering a sustainable local economy.



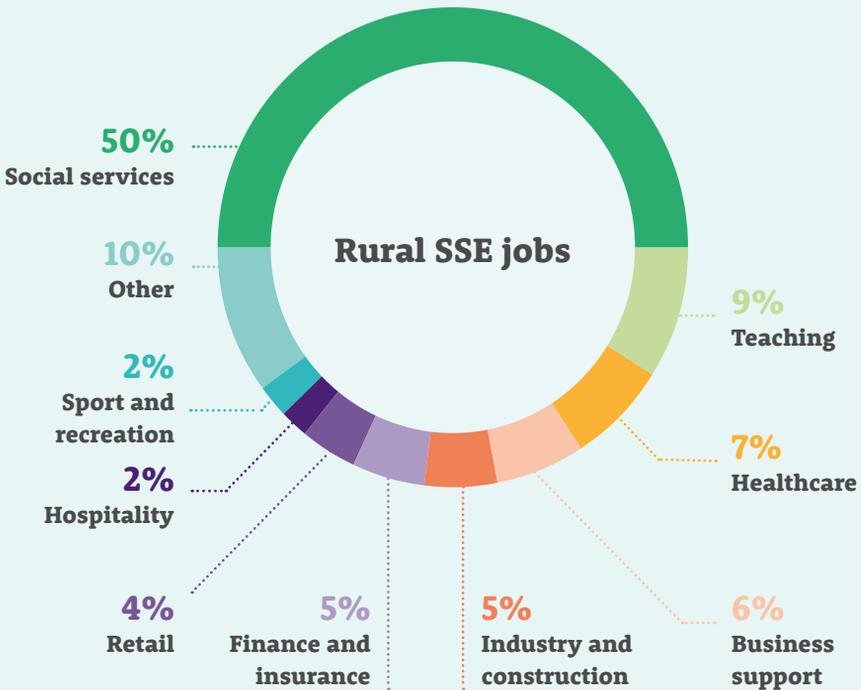
**161,900**  
jobs in the SSE  
in rural areas



**22,510**  
rural SSE employers;  
83% are micro-businesses



**17.7%**  
of rural  
private-sector jobs



## SOCIAL SERVICES

### 50% OF RURAL SSE JOBS

In areas struggling with high levels of isolation among older people and the challenges of catering for a younger population and marginalised people, the SSE's disproportionate role in home help services, social housing and care facilities, and childcare shows the vital function it fulfils in maintaining solidarity and forging social ties.

#### WHAT TYPES OF FACILITIES?

Community crèches, childminder centres, day centres for adults or children, care homes, vocational rehabilitation centres, etc.

## HEALTHCARE

### 11,100 SSE JOBS

In response to the growth of medical deserts due to the decrease in public healthcare employment and the shortage of public healthcare facilities in some areas, SSE enterprises are working to improve healthcare access for all. The SSE's share in healthcare employment in rural areas (25%) is double its share in the rest of the country (12%).

#### WHAT TYPES OF FACILITIES?

Hospitals run by non-profits or foundations, home healthcare agencies specialised in skilled nursing services, community primary care centres, etc.

## RETAIL

### 3 TIMES MORE SSE JOBS IN RURAL AREAS

In France, the SSE's share in the retail sector is three times bigger in rural areas than in the rest of the country. Promoting local products and traditional skills is a key component of SSE projects like multiple-activity shops and short food supply chains, which are helping drive the trend towards relocalising businesses and industries.

#### WHAT TYPES OF FACILITIES?

Producer or consumer or marketing cooperatives, community grocers or cafés, etc.

# THE RURAL SSE IS RESILIENT, COOPERATIVE, AND PLUGGED IN TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES!

With its strong local ties, its values, and the cooperative energy it cultivates, the SSE offers a viable business model for rural areas.

## A MORE RESILIENT WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

In rural areas, SSE employment grew by almost 5% between the 2008 financial crisis and 2015, while it fell by nearly 8.4% in the public sector and 2.6% in the non-SSE private sector during the same period.

## MORE RURAL JOBS THAN IN THE REST OF THE ECONOMY

With 17% of all rural jobs, the SSE's share in employment is much higher in rural areas than in urban or peri-urban areas. The SSE also has a more rural bias than the rest of the economy: rural jobs make up 7% of all SSE jobs, versus 5% of non-SSE jobs.

## A MORE COOPERATIVE ECONOMY

Cooperatives have a strong presence in rural areas, where they make up 19% of SSE enterprises (12% of SSE enterprises in the rest of the country). They are particularly common in productive sectors - especially agriculture, with farmers cooperatives and sales and farm machinery cooperatives - as well as in manufacturing and the building industry.



*“The SSE is an amazing driver for local development in rural areas. The Covid-19 crisis has reminded us of its capacity to invent, adapt, and maintain social ties. Its agility (multi-disciplinarity, local networks, community momentum, etc.) makes it a valuable resource for the “post-Covid” world.”*

**Emmanuelle Rousset,**

VICE-PRESIDENT - ILLE-ET-VILAINE  
DEPARTMENTAL COUNCIL

# WHY SUPPORT SSE INITIATIVES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES?

Urbanisation and the decline of industry and manufacturing have profoundly altered the structure of the economy and life and work in rural areas. The SSE invents relevant solutions to address the challenges of local development and the regeneration of rural areas.



## 6 CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

- 1 Developing **local jobs and the local economy**
- 2 Developing **inclusive local services**
- 3 Launching **the ecological and solidarity transition** in all regions
- 4 Developing **solidarity and social cohesion**
- 5 Strengthening **community mobilisation** and local democracy
- 6 Supporting **civic engagement** and youth social entrepreneurship

*“The SSE is the expression of the collective momentum of people working towards a shared goal for society. It reflects local residents’ desire to take back control of their future and the means of meeting their own needs, as well as the broader economy.”*

**Lucie Gras**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ESS FRANCE

## CHALLENGE

### LOCAL JOBS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

SSE enterprises consolidate an economy based on local resources and connections. They buttress meaningful industries, create jobs that are safe from relocation, and play a key role in the passing on of businesses in agriculture, retail, and trades, particularly in the form of worker cooperatives (SCOP).



*“In Brittany , nearly half of all businesses were put up for sale due to the owner’s retirement between 2010 and 2020, leading to a risk of the loss of local jobs and thus the possibility of working near home. Transferring businesses to employees has emerged as a solution for preserving local jobs.”*

**Brieuc Poirier,**

COORDINATOR, SSE CENTRE NETWORK - BRETAGNE SSE CHAMBER

## CHALLENGE

### LOCAL SERVICES

Jobs alone are not enough for rural areas to thrive. They also need solutions to the difficulties engendered by geographical isolation and the lack of local services. SSE enterprises offer solutions that in many cases are no longer offered on the conventional market, with innovative services like mobile grocers, consumer cooperatives, community cafés, caretaking, eco-friendly mobility, short food supply chains, and more.

*“In regional nature parks, SSE businesses connect societal issues and economic development. They are growing quickly in the energy and climate transition sector and offer a full palette of resources for shared projects, in line with the parks’ goal of networking and building public-private partnerships.”*

**Philippe Moutet,**

CLIMATE, ENERGY AND ARCHITECTURE POLICY OFFICER - FÉDÉRATION DES PARCS NATURELS RÉGIONAUX DE FRANCE.

## CHALLENGE

### ECOLOGICAL AND SOLIDARITY TRANSITION

Mobility, food sustainability, energy transition, the circular economy... SSE enterprises reconcile social and environmental utility to accelerate the transition to an economic and societal system that fosters local social cohesion and protects the environment.

# 4

## CHALLENGE

### SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

SSE players make people and local development their key priority, fostering social cohesion and social ties – something that is a major challenge for rural areas with low population density where residents, especially the elderly, can feel very isolated.



*“The SSE plays a key role in rural areas, reflecting a powerful desire for change in our society, as well as a strong local government commitment. The ANPP (National Association of Regional and Rural Growth Centres) and the territories it represents firmly believe in the need to shift toward new, more socially conscious ways of living and producing that leave more room for people.”*

**Lisa Labarrière,**

POLICY OFFICER, ANPP

# 5

## CHALLENGE

### COLLECTIVE INVOLVEMENT

SSE enterprises encourage residents to get involved in local life by offering spaces for expression and engagement. They spark cooperative energy and offer everyone an opportunity to contribute their skills to meaningful projects that build connections (community cafés, third places, co-housing, etc.).



*“There is a growing awareness of the need to factor in the local dimension and use endogenous local resources in local economic development. Third places (re) create communities that foster the capacity to take action, and prove that economic development can be local.”*

**Rachid Cherfaoui,**

CHAIRMAN OF THE MAISON  
D'ÉCONOMIE SOLIDAIRE,  
PAYS DE BRAY

# 6

## CHALLENGE

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In an effort to limit the population drain due to the lack of training options and jobs in rural areas, many SSE enterprises offer social entrepreneurship training, particularly for young people, as well as opportunities to test business ideas and get involved in community service projects (youth service cooperative, civic service, incubators, etc.).

# INNOVATIVE RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES FACING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Across all economic sectors, SSE enterprises offer relevant, innovative solutions that contribute to making rural communities more resilient and advance the ecological and solidarity transition.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

### DEVELOPING SOCIAL TIES AND SOCIAL COHESION FOR A MORE JUST SOCIETY

The SSE enterprise *Aide à domicile en milieu rural* (ADMR) is France's leading social care services network (childcare and parenting, disability support, help for the elderly, home maintenance, carer support). It brings together 2,700 local non-profits that provide services across France.

[www.admr.org](http://www.admr.org)



## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### MAKING CULTURE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE

*Concerts de Poche*, a non-profit founded in 2002, exists to share “serious music” (classical, jazz, and opera) with people who lack access to it. It does so by inviting top artists and young talents to perform in existing arts venues and other amenities like community halls in rural areas and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

[www.concertsdepoche.com](http://www.concertsdepoche.com)



## SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

### RECONCILING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FOOD ACCESS

*Tête Haute* is a socially conscious craft brewery in Couffé, Loire-Atlantique. The first work integration brewery in France, it boasts its own organic hopfield and employs people on work integration schemes.

[www.tete-haute.fr](http://www.tete-haute.fr)

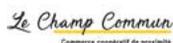


## LOCAL RETAIL

### SUPPORTING THE DIVERSITY OF LOCAL ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

*Le Champ Commun*, located in Augan, Morbihan, is a multi-stakeholder cooperative (SCIC), which helps rural residents reclaim local businesses like grocers, microbreweries, or inns using collective management strategies.

[www.lechampcommun.fr](http://www.lechampcommun.fr)



## CIRCULAR ECONOMY

### REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT OF BUSINESS

*J'aime mes bouteilles* is a wine bottle reuse organisation in the Jura. Founded and developed by the incubator Clus'Ter Jura in response to "*Territoires Zéro Déchet Zéro Gaspillage*", the French government's call for waste prevention projects, it now has 15 members from sectors including the wine industry and beverage distribution.

[www.jaimemesbouteilles.fr](http://www.jaimemesbouteilles.fr)



## LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### CREATING MEANINGFUL LOCAL JOBS THAT ARE SAFE FROM RELOCATING

*Coodem* is a BEC, a business and employment cooperative founded in 2003 in Mayenne. It supports people with plans for businesses in different sectors including trades, retail, and care services, and helps implement joint local job development programmes (youth cooperatives, business set-up experience, etc.).

[www.coodemarrage.com](http://www.coodemarrage.com)



## SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

### RECONCILING INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO MOBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

*Attelu muilità* is a solidarity garage supported by the non-profit *Corse Mobilité Solidaire*, which facilitates access to mobility for underprivileged people in La Balagne, a particularly impoverished part of Corsica. As a recognised work integration site (ACI), it helps people excluded from the job market return to work and offers low-cost vehicle rentals, sales, and repair services.

[www.garagesolidaire-corse.com](http://www.garagesolidaire-corse.com)



## HEALTHCARE

### ENHANCING PREVENTIVE CARE AND BROADENING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

*GEMS 23*, an employers' group in the health and social care sector, has set up operations in Guéret, in a very rural area of the Creuse. It provides members with a legal structure for pooled hiring, giving establishments more flexibility and medical professionals more stable employment, while patients enjoy continuity of care.

[facebook.com/GEMS23000](https://facebook.com/GEMS23000)



## INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

### ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY LIVING AND REDUCING ISOLATION

*Habitats des Possibles* is a non-profit that fosters intergenerational connections to revitalise rural areas by creating co-housing communities. These communities are places where social ties and inclusive practices can flourish and offer a positive alternative to retirement homes.

[www.habitatsdespossibles.org](http://www.habitatsdespossibles.org)



## ENERGY TRANSITION

### DEVELOPING LOCAL, COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

*Centrales Villageoises* are local, community-led companies that implement projects to advance energy transition (renewable energy production, increasing energy efficiency, etc.). They are focused on local communities, bringing together residents, local governments, and local businesses. In 2019, the *Centrales Villageoises* network included 48 companies that were already in operation or in the process of being set up across six regions.

[www.centralesvillageoises.fr](http://www.centralesvillageoises.fr)



## THIRD PLACES

### PROMOTING COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO NEW SERVICES AND CREATE SOCIAL TIES

*L'Hermitage*, located in a rural area at the intersection of the Aisne and Oise valleys, was founded by a group of some fifty people and defines itself as a third place for rural and community innovations. Its mission: encouraging users to share knowledge, experiment, and take action for an environmental and civic transition, through collective workshops, solution testing, and support for initiatives by rural entrepreneurs.

[www.hermitagelelab.com](http://www.hermitagelelab.com)



# WHAT DEVELOPMENT DRIVERS FOR THE SSE?

Strengthening the SSE in rural areas means encouraging social innovations that meet local needs and taking action to revitalise local communities. What drivers should be harnessed to support and develop SSE initiatives as part of the rural development movement?

## 4 DRIVERS



**FUNDING SSE  
PROJECT OWNERS  
AND BUSINESSES**



**PROVIDING  
SUPPORT  
FOR SSE  
PROJECTS**

*“The SSE and rural communities: a positive dynamic that boosts employment and communities’ appeal. In areas with lower population and resource density, the RTE Foundation contributes to enhancing and revitalising the SSE and supports projects based on three pillars: social innovation to address a wide range of rural challenges, particularly the many transitions under way, broader cooperation among local players to co-develop and set up common assets that are relevant to the community as a whole, and sobriety and pragmatism in use of scarce and fragile resources.”*

**Frédéric Dohet,**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - RTE FOUNDATION

*“Social enterprises are a rich source of solutions that address social needs in rural areas. These entrepreneurs identify local vulnerabilities and contribute sustainable solutions in partnership with the ecosystem by creating jobs, mobilising local resources, and promoting local heritage. They need visibility, support, and recognition as key players from their communities to succeed and maximise their local impact.”*

**Josépha Poret,**

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER – RONALPIA INCUBATOR



**SUPPORTING AWARENESS-  
RAISING CAMPAIGNS  
ON THE SSE AND  
COMMUNITY  
INVOLVEMENT**



**ENCOURAGING  
PARTNERSHIPS  
TO FOSTER  
THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE SSE**

*“Rural areas are fertile ground for best practices that can lead to the emergence of new, collective solutions to meet local needs. For the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, developing local engineering to support the SSE was a way of encouraging its inclusion in local development plans and coordination between players, and enabling partnerships to promote meaningful local projects.”*

**Catherine Mengel,**

POLICY OFFICER, DEVELOPMENT AGENCY - DEPARTMENTAL  
COUNCIL OF MEURTHE-ET-MOSELLE

# 1 FUNDING SSE PROJECT OWNERS AND BUSINESSES

Eliminating the financial obstacles to the creation and development of projects that serve the public, create local jobs that are safe from relocation, and enhance the region's appeal.

## 4 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### 1 Help SSE enterprises

**obtain** a range of subsidies – those available to all businesses, earmarked for the SSE, general or sector-specific (agriculture, culture, energy, etc.) by advising entrepreneurs and incorporating social utility into the eligibility criteria or contractual requirements.

### 2 Support SSE enterprises:

directly, via operational subsidies and investments or calls for projects, and indirectly by supporting solidarity finance institutions in the community.

### 3 Develop funding vehicles

tailored to the projects and their collective dimension, including crowd-funding: participatory budgeting, crowdfunding platforms, etc.

### 4 Develop socially-conscious

**purchasing policies** that facilitate access to public and private procurement for SSE enterprises.



### Local governments: use your existing contractual instruments to support the SSE!

The rural development policy, supported in part by the European Union, has introduced numerous types of contract designed specifically for rural communities to facilitate financial and operational cooperation between public and private organisa-

tions. Integrating dedicated budgets for SSE projects into these government measures can give SSE enterprises access to targeted funding, support locally-based initiatives, and increase their community impact.

## THE RTE FOUNDATION

### Call for projects

National

Since 2008, the RTE Foundation has supported public projects that contribute to the economic, social, and equitable development of rural communities. The projects it supports assist vulnerable people, contribute to a more inclusive society and to maintaining and strengthening local social cohesion, and advance sustainable development.

[www.fondation-rte.org](http://www.fondation-rte.org)

## CIGALES CLUBS

### Solidarity finance

National

A *Cigales club* – an investment club dedicated to local, alternative management of solidarity investments – is a solidarity venture capital institution dedicated to the creation and development of small local and collective businesses that offer social, environmental, or cultural value. The Cigales movement, which is active throughout France, encourages a socially-conscious, activist approach to finance.

[www.cigales.asso.fr](http://www.cigales.asso.fr)

## J'ADOpte UN PROJET

### Crowdfunding

Nouvelle-Aquitaine

*J'adopte un Projet*, the crowdfunding platform launched by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Council, has funded projects with a strong social impact since 2014, with the support of partners including the Regional Union of Worker Cooperatives (URSCOP), Insertion Poitou-Charentes Active, Cigales and Adie. Past projects include financing village grocers, farm shops, festivals, and community currencies.

[www.jadopteunprojet.com](http://www.jadopteunprojet.com)

## À VOS ID

### Direct financial support

Centre-Val de Loire

The Centre-Val de Loire Regional Council started the *À vos ID* programme to encourage the emergence of and test innovative, collaborative initiatives. The Region provides financial support for initiatives that foster rural-urban cooperation, improve intergenerational relationships, and strengthen the SSE.

[www.regioncentre-valde Loire.fr](http://www.regioncentre-valde Loire.fr)

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CLAUSES IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS

### Socially responsible purchasing

Meurthe-et-Moselle

The Meurthe-et-Moselle departmental council is making it easier for work integration social enterprises (WISE) to access its public procurement process for construction, cleaning, catering, and professional services. It ensures that these social responsibility clauses effect real change by tying subsidies to performance of work integration measures (provision of labour, sub-contracting).

[www.meurthe-et-moselle.fr](http://www.meurthe-et-moselle.fr)

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

Since 2018, the “Territorial Equality Guarantee” from the solidarity financier *France Active* has enabled easier access to financing for project owners based in rural regeneration zones.

[www.franceactive.org](http://www.franceactive.org)

# 2 ENCOURAGING SUPPORT FOR SSE PROJECTS

Supporting the targeted programmes and measures that foster the emergence, creation, and consolidation of SSE activities in the community and ensuring a positive local environment for projects with a high social and environmental impact.

## 4 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**1 Support the players, tools, and initiatives that direct project owners** towards relevant support and finance schemes and encourage synergies: guidance platforms, support provider groups, etc.

**2 Encourage the development of programmes to support** emerging SSE enterprises and community projects based on a shared analysis of needs and a co-development process with stakeholders (local government, residents, businesses, SSE players, etc.) like project generators.

**3 Contribute to the development of SSE enterprise creation and consolidation programmes** like social innovation incubators or the DLA (Local Support Programme), the main public programme underpinning SSE structures throughout France.

**4 Support business incubators and BEC cooperatives** that host project owners to secure the start-up of their businesses. These structures help them get set up, acquire space, and define the right business model.



### **The *Fabrique à initiatives*, driving social innovation with and for communities.**

The *Fabrique à initiatives*, founded and run by Avise since 2010, is a programme that helps local stakeholders understand the community's needs and connects public and private organisations and residents to develop targeted entrepreneurial responses. The programme is

supported locally by more than 20 bodies which model activities or share innovations that have already proven their value elsewhere, tailoring them to local needs and facilitating implementation.

**[fabriqueainitiatives.org](http://fabriqueainitiatives.org)**

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

60% of French people say that if they started a business, they would want to do so in a rural area.

Source: *Familles rurales, Territoires ruraux: perceptions et réalités de vie*, Avril 2019.

## THE CRÉA'RURAL COLLECTIVE

### Cooperation

National

*Créa'rural*, a collective founded in 2020 by Avise and the RTES as part of the TRESSONS project (see page 31) aims to provide broader SSE support coverage across the country by promoting dedicated programmes, sharing best practices, and producing resources. It brings together SSE support players in rural communities (social innovation incubators, local support schemes (DLA) implementation structures, and local development agencies).

[www.avise.org](http://www.avise.org)

## COMPTOIR DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOLIDAIRE

### Access and orientation

Meurthe-et-Moselle

In partnership with the departmental council of Meurthe-et-Moselle, the Pays Terres de Lorraine inter-municipal body founded the *Comptoir de l'économie solidaire*, a programme run by the local development agency to provide enhanced support for SSE projects. The programme aims to promote the SSE, identify project owners, guide them towards support resources that meet their needs, and consolidate an ecosystem that encourages the development of a collective momentum.

[www.developpement.terresdelorraine.org](http://www.developpement.terresdelorraine.org)

## ECOOPARC

### Emerging projects programme

Ballons des Vosges Regional Nature Park

Ecooparc is a coordination and engineering programme designed to generate economic projects with high added value for society and for the area. Founded by the Cooproduction multi-stakeholder cooperative and the Ballons des Vosges Regional Nature Park, it serves as a support resource for shared projects that meet local needs and contribute to rural development.

[www.ecooparc.com](http://www.ecooparc.com)

## RONALPIA

### Incubation Programme

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

Since 2018, the incubator Ronalpia has been trialling creation phase support for rural and peri-urban project owners. With support from local government and networks as well as sector experts like the GRAP (regional neighbourhood food supply chain group) and Copawatt, a community energy transition accelerator, Ronalpia offers support programmes designed to meet the unique needs of rural social entrepreneurs.

[www.ronalpia.fr](http://www.ronalpia.fr)

## COOPÉRATIVE D'INSTALLATION EN AGRICULTURE PAYSANNE (CIAP)

### Business and employment cooperative

Pays de la Loire

CIAP is a business incubator that provides a legal, tax, and accounting structure for small farmers in the Pays de la Loire region. Founded by family farmers, organisations that belong to the *La Confédération paysanne* farmers' union, the SSE and civil society, the CIAP offers permanent test spaces for organic market gardening.

[www.ciap-pdl.fr](http://www.ciap-pdl.fr)

# 3 SUPPORTING AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGNS ON THE SSE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Supporting promotion of local initiatives and encouraging movements and projects that have a strong community focus and encourage local involvement (local government, businesses, residents).

## 4 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**1 Encourage young people to get involved** in rural community development through targeted programmes.

**2 Support events, programmes, and spaces for dialogue** to raise awareness of the SSE and get local stakeholders involved in shared projects (local action groups, popular events, hackathons, etc.).

**3 Support the creation and development of spaces** that are conducive to social ties and grassroots initiatives, such as community cafés, third places, and co-working spaces, which create opportunities for gatherings, conversations, and debates and stimulate collective intelligence.

**4 Fund programmes and processes to assess the social impact** of SSE enterprises so they can improve their development strategy and promote their positive impact on rural communities.



### **The National Rural Network (RRN) is committed to mobilising communities for rural development**

The National Rural Network has launched a call for projects for a “community mobilisation for rural development”, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), to support national or inter-regional collaborative projects that promote networking and local

movements in line with the European rural development policy’s goal of rural regeneration. The TRESSONS project, led by Avise and the RTES, is one of the 36 projects supported by the National Rural Network (see p. 31).

[www.reseaurural.fr](http://www.reseaurural.fr)

## LES FABRIQUES DU MONDE RURAL

### Youth engagement

National

To support youth engagement and enable young people to contribute to development and leadership in their communities, the Rural Movement of Christian Youth (MRJC) founded the *Fabriques du Monde* rural programme, with a number of experimental spaces where young people can create economic and social activities, start movements, and lend their energy to civic projects.

[www.mrjc.org](http://www.mrjc.org)

## EVEIL PROJECTS SCHOOL

### Training and education

Ardèche

The EVEIL projects school, whose name comes from the French acronym for “encouraging, promoting local experimentation and initiatives to do business differently”, is run by the non-profit Amesud, which aims to encourage new SSE projects in Ardèche. The school, which has no academic prerequisites, offers training and collective support to facilitate participants’ integration into the local ecosystem.

[www.amesud.fr](http://www.amesud.fr)

## LOCAL START-UPS

### Community involvement

National

In Lons-le-Saunier, the ClusTer Jura economic cooperation agency kicked off the *Start-up de territoire* movement with the support of ADEME – the French ecological transition agency – and the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region. This approach, which has now spread nation-wide, is used to organise events that draw diverse local stakeholders to spark ideas and projects with a strong social, economic, and environmental impact.

[www.startupdeterritoire.fr](http://www.startupdeterritoire.fr)

## #CHEZYONNE

### Digital third places

Côtes-d’Armor

The town of Moncontour received support from the SSE project incubator Tag22 and the Pays de Saint-Brieuc SSE centre to create #ChezYonne, a digital third place designed to meet the needs of people who lack access to digital technology, especially the older generation. #ChezYonne provides devices, user support in the form of games and introductory workshops, help with online administrative tasks, and more.

[www.moncontour.bzh](http://www.moncontour.bzh)

## FIFTY-FIFTY

### Civic involvement

Nord

To make its resident involvement policy a reality and encourage popular initiatives, the town of Loos-en-Gohelle created “fifty-fifty”, a programme to fund local residents’ proposals for improving the local environment (planting trees, cultural events, building restoration, etc.).

[www.loos-en-gohelle.fr](http://www.loos-en-gohelle.fr)

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

The French government is financing a call for expressions of interest entitled “*Fabriques de Territoire*”, slated to run into 2022, to support the creation of 300 third spaces, 150 of them in rural areas, and stimulate local development.

[www.societenumerique.gouv.fr](http://www.societenumerique.gouv.fr)

# 4 ENCOURAGING PARTNERSHIPS TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SSE

Support spaces and drivers for cooperation to promote new economic trends that will build SSE stakeholders' capacity to act in rural areas and develop collective solutions to local challenges.

## 4 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**1 Support the emergence and consolidation of multi-stakeholder cooperatives**, which bring local residents, businesses, and government agencies together around business projects that benefit the community: reopening local shops, building small-scale local industries, producing renewable energy, etc.

**2 Support the creation and development of SSE employer groups**, which encourage job pooling and offer a solution to recruiting difficulties and the scarcity of skills in rural areas.

**3 Energise and strengthen local SSE networks** (local economic cooperation agencies, local networks, SSE clusters, etc.) and support their role as local leaders and networkers.

**4 Sponsor major professional events** focused on the SSE to encourage operational and economic partnerships between SSE and non-SSE players.



### The regional SSE chamber (CRESS) a network leader enshrined in law

The CRESSs, which are present in all regions, bring together SSE enterprises and networks. They are recognised under French law by the SSE Act, No. 2014-856 of July 31, 2014, which defines their role:

- Representing the interests of the SSE before the local public authorities;
- Supporting the creation, development, and survival of SSE enterprises;
- Supporting training for SSE enterprise leaders and employees;
- Contributing to the collection, use, and publication of economic and social data on SSE enterprises.

## LAC48.COOP

*Multi-stakeholder cooperative*

Lozère

LAC48.COOP, founded in 2019, is France's first local economic development multi-stakeholder cooperative backed by the General Confederation of Worker Cooperative Companies (CGSCOP) and the French Retail Confederation (CDF). It promotes community actions, local services, and local news sharing thanks to an online platform.

[langogneetvous.com](http://langogneetvous.com)

## GE ARKOSE

*Employers' Group*

Puy de Dôme

Arkose, an employers' group (GE) founded in 2005 in the Puy de Dôme, has approximately a hundred members, including retailers, tradespeople, small businesses, and non-profits. Its three employees provide shared administrative services (payroll and payroll tax management, accounting, etc.) and facilitate entrepreneurship and business development.

[ge-arkose.fr](http://ge-arkose.fr)

### ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

Regional brands based on a strong regional identity, solidarity, and sustainable development ("*Biovallée*", "*100 % Gaillard*", "*Made in Gévaudan*", etc.) can help SSE enterprises gain visibility and facilitate partnerships.

## THE PAYS DE BRAY LOCAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION HUB

*Network and partnership*

Oise and Seine-Maritime

The Pays de Bray local economic cooperation hub (PTCE) is represented by the *Maison de l'Économie Solidaire* and has contributed to the development of a social economy and affordable services for vulnerable people for over a decade. With a strong commitment to research and development to meet the needs of the Pays de Bray region, it represents over 300 jobs in the environmental and public services sectors.

[www.eco-solidaire.fr](http://www.eco-solidaire.fr)

## SSE CENTRES

*Local network*

Brittany

Since 2008, Breton communities have opened 19 SSE centres to bring together SSE players in a given area, support project owners and collective projects, and promote the SSE. Each centre works closely with the others as part of a regional network coordinated by the Bretagne SSE Chamber.

[www.ess-bretagne.org](http://www.ess-bretagne.org)

## ADAR-CIVAM

*Cooperation among professionals*

Indre et Cher

*Adar-Civam*, a non-profit dedicated to the agricultural and rural development of Boischaud Sud, aims to coordinate, promote, and develop initiatives to address the challenge of generational turnover which has left many local businesses in need of new ownership. The organisation is a member of the networks that support local initiatives (short food supply chains, changes to agricultural practices, etc.).

[www.adar-civam.fr](http://www.adar-civam.fr)

# NUMEROUS STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE SSE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

In rural areas, SSE projects increasingly address cross-cutting challenges, particularly the ecological and solidarity transition, and are trending towards multi-activity business models. Where can you direct SSE project owners?



Meeting project owners' very different needs and providing appropriate guidance requires familiarity with the ecosystem of SSE support and territorial organisations:

- Resource providers;
- Support programmes and subsidies for SSE enterprise creation and consolidation;
- Traditional or sector-specific support offers, whose scope can include SSE project activities.

The diagram opposite provides a non-exhaustive list of organisations. Some offer dedicated support or financing for rural SSE enterprises, while others are progressively rolling out this type of service.

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

Explore the maps of SSE support providers and programmes and resources for raising awareness, educating, and equipping project owners and SSE ecosystem participants on the portal:

[www.avise.org](http://www.avise.org)

## INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

### Resource centres and experience banks

- Alpine local development non-profit organisation (ADRETS)
- Avise
- *Le Carrefour des innovations sociales* social innovation platform
- *Le Labo de l'ESS* SSE think tank
- Network of Local Governments for a Solidarity Economy (RTES)
- National Union of Local Development Stakeholders (UNADEL)

...

### Regional SSE Chambers

- Targeted rural development initiatives in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bretagne, Grand Est, and other regions

...

### Regional rural networks

- Targeted SSE support initiatives in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Cap Rural), Grand Est, Pays de la Loire, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Normandie, and other regions

...



### Research and Development

- Institut des Territoires Coopératifs
- Sol et civilisation

...



## FINANCING PROVIDERS

### European Funds

- LEADER, EAFRD etc.

### Public Financiers

- Banque des Territoires
- Local governments
- Local Action Groups (Leader)
- Regional and Rural Growth Centres (PETR)

...

### Solidarity finance and crowdfunding players

- Adie
- France Active
- MiiMOSA

...

### Foundations

- Avril Foundation
- Carasso Foundation
- Crédit Coopératif Foundation
- MACIF Foundation
- RTE Foundation

...

## REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT

### Political representation

- French Association of Rural Mayors (AMRF)
- Rural Parliament

...

### Local development networks

- Familles rurales
- Fédération des Foyers Ruraux
- Federation of Regional Natural Parks
- Federation of farm machinery cooperatives (FNCUMA)
- CIVAM Network
- CREFAD Network
- Réseau National des Espaces-Test Agricoles (RENETA)
- Trame Network
- Terre de Liens
- Territoires Conseils

...



### SSE Networks

- Coop de France
- Ligue de l'Enseignement
- Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne
- Réseau Cocagne
- WISE networks
- Regional Union of Worker Cooperatives (URSCOP)

...

### SSE and local development support

- Local Support Programme (DLA)
- Créa'rural Collective
- Emergence & Acceleration community: Atis, Cocoshaker, Ecooparc, Ronalpia, etc.

...

### General support

- BGE
- Chambers of Commerce (Chambers of Commerce and Industry Chambers of trades and crafts)

...

# 6 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE NOW

**SHARE** this publication to raise awareness of the SSE among your partners and all local stakeholders and to highlight the role played by social innovators in economic and social development in rural communities.



**STAY INFORMED** using the resources, news, and explainers available on the [avise.org](http://avise.org) portal and in the Avise newsletter.

**PARTICIPATE** in local, national and European events on the SSE, social innovation, and collective movements for regional development. Events are an opportunity to meet other players, discuss best practices, and better understand the needs and challenges of the territory's partners.



**VISIT** local SSE organisations in your region and meet the people who are working and taking action together to do business differently by centring social utility in their work.

**JOIN** local networks of public and private stakeholders that aim to build shared knowledge, cooperation, and exchanges of knowledge and practices, particularly those led by the CRESSs, which are present nationwide.



**SUPPORT** SSE support and finance professionals in rural areas, to help them deploy their programmes in areas that are not yet covered.

# TO FIND OUT MORE

[CONTACT@AVISE.ORG](mailto:CONTACT@AVISE.ORG)

## THE SSE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

This publication was prepared as part of the TRESSONS project, led by Avise and the RTES with the support of the National Rural Network and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The TRESSONS project aims to analyse and strengthen the impact of the social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) on rural communities. Discover the TRESSONS project's other publications:

- **L'économie sociale et solidaire dans les territoires ruraux**,  
Avise, RTES, Observatoire national de l'ESS du CNCRESS, June 2019
- **Synthèse de l'étude « L'économie sociale et solidaire dans les territoires ruraux »**,  
Avise, RTES, Observatoire national de l'ESS du CNCRESS, September 2019
- **Territoires d'innovation sociale : 4 monographies de territoire**,  
Avise, RTES, September 2019
- **Panorama de projets d'ESS dans les territoires ruraux**,  
Avise, RTES, May 2020
- **Développement ESS et ruralités : 4 fiches levier et 5 fiches coopération**,  
Avise, RTES, 2020

## ESS & TERRITORIES

- The RTES website:  
Newsletters, "Déniché pour Vous" fact sheets, and more.  
[www.rtes.fr](http://www.rtes.fr)
- The "ESS et ruralité(s)" fact sheet from the Municipal'ESS kit, RTES, May 2020
- The *Territoires* de l'Avise section  
[www.avise.org](http://www.avise.org)
- The Avise publications catalogue  
[www.avise.org](http://www.avise.org)

## THE AVISE COLLECTION OF HANDBOOKS

The Handbooks collection, designed for public- and private-sector decision makers, features a range of content to raise awareness among local social and economic development stakeholders.



# How and why should you support the development of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and social innovation in rural areas.

This document, published by Avise with the support of the RTES as part of the TRESSONS project, provides the keys to understanding the SSE's central role in the development and appeal of rural communities, as well as in trends that promote an ecological and solidarity transition.

It offers a broad survey of the innovative responses that the rural SSE has developed in response to major societal challenges as well as the many ways for public- and private-sector decision makers to make a difference by encouraging social innovation and supporting projects with a high social and environmental impact in their communities.



The role of Avise is to develop the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and social innovation by providing entrepreneurs with support and helping to create a structured ecosystem conducive to their development. Created in 2002, Avise is a collective engineering agency that works with public and private sector organisations committed to public service

[www.avise.org](http://www.avise.org)



The RTES brings together more than 130 French local governments to support the SSE and promote local initiatives, encourage best practise sharing, and find ways to improve existing policies.

[www.rtes.fr](http://www.rtes.fr)

