



TESS PROJECT

Grant Agreement n° 603705

WP 4: Case studies integration and policy recommendations

D4.3: Transition Strategies Policy Report

Reference code: TESS – D4.3

This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration under Grant Agreement No. 603705 (Project TESS).



Project Acronym: TESS

Project Title: Towards European Societal Sustainability

Contract Number: 603705

Title of report: Transition strategies policy report

Reference code: TESS – D4.3

Short Description: This deliverable presents an analysis of the relations between community-based initiatives in Europe and public policies. The aim is on the one hand to extract policy-relevant information from the research conducted so far, in order to present and discuss some general evidence. On the other hand, we identified eight policy environments, at multiple scales, which are particularly supportive for community initiatives to diffuse and to persist or, on the contrary, which act as barriers for community organization and social innovation. In the Deliverable, we present the results of ad-hoc research about these policy environments, covering all the countries and domains investigated in the TESS project. The final aim is to provide several recommendations about policy improvements which, we think, would substantially enhance the potential of community initiatives in favoring a sustainable transition.

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Partners owning: Sapienza

Made available to: public

Versioning		
Version	Date	Name, organization
0.1	4 Nov 2016	Raffaella Coletti (Sapienza)
0.2	11 Nov 2016	Filippo Celata (Sapienza)
0.3	21 Nov 2016	Raffaella Coletti (Sapienza)
0.4	29 Nov 2016	Filippo Celata (Sapienza)

Quality check

Internal Reviewers: Alessandra Prampolini, T6; Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti, Sapienza (Chapters 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11); Stefanie Becker, PIK, and Liz Dinnie, JHI (Chapters 3 and 6)

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1 Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to explore the relations between public policies and community-based initiatives (CBIs) that experiment with grassroots approaches for the promotion of a sustainable transition. The aim is to extract some general evidence from the research conducted so far in order to identify and to investigate policy environments, at multiple scales, which are particularly conducive and supportive for CBIs to diffuse and to persist or, on the contrary, which act as impediments and barriers for community activism and grassroots innovation, and in order to provide policy recommendations.

The policy issues discussed in the report refer, on the one hand, to very practical difficulties grassroots initiatives face, such as accessing and controlling the spaces and assets needed to run the initiative; finding an appropriate legal status; relying, although not excessively, on public funding; dealing with transparent, coherent and suitable regulations; and having a voice in the governance of policy areas which are of major concern to them. On the other hand, investigating how these challenges are managed in practice is useful for highlighting more general tensions between grassroots initiatives and public institutions, how these tensions are negotiated within more or less favourable policy environments, and how similar initiatives react, adapt and behave differently.

After introducing the aims and structure of the report, outlining a methodological framework and providing a synthetic literature review on the topic, we discuss some general evidence that emerged from a cross-European survey of 63 CBIs that are active in the domains of food, mobility, waste or energy. Although collaborating with public institutions and the 'political' dimension more generally is perceived by CBIs as their least important aim, relative to other dimensions and aims, CBIs' relationships with public bodies are overall frequent, intense, important - 70% of initiatives consider establishing a link with political actors as relevant; 60% have established some kind of relationship of collaboration with public bodies (especially local/municipal) and 76% of those collaborations with public bodies are considered, at least, "very important" for the initiatives.

In terms of the contents of these relationships, the picture is more mixed, and problematic. Only 17% of the CBIs acknowledge a relevant support from public policies - especially in terms of public funding - and do not report any policy obstacles. On the other hand, 62% of CBIs reported some kind of constraint from public policies; there are primarily four types of 'obstacles' reported. The most cited regards regulations and laws that impose requirements in terms of organizational structure, legal status, volunteer labour. This is followed by unavailability of, or difficulties in, accessing public funding. The third most often listed has to do with access to property, or assets, for example, with the temporary use of vacant/abandoned public spaces, or obstacles imposed by planning regulations. Finally, public institutions are often accused of simply "not doing enough," and the policy environment is said to be unsupportive in general, ambiguous or reluctant towards CBIs.

Based on this evidence, we identified eight 'policy environments' to be investigated more in-depth, covering all the countries involved in the project, various domains of community engagement, and different policy-relevant issues.

The first of these case studies focuses on the policy regimes in Rome and Barcelona (Chapter 4) for the assignment of abandoned buildings to social initiatives. Such policies are regarded as a useful and low-cost strategy for urban regeneration and social innovation, but several practical and political barriers are identified which hinder this potential.

The second case study is about the multi-level institutional framework in which alternative food networks operate in Barcelona (Chapter 5). These policies, it is argued, too often rely on market-led mechanisms and upon a specific and 'elitist' conceptualization of alternative food networks which ends up paradoxically excluding CBIs or other truly 'alternative' initiatives.

Chapter 6 discusses how regulations that are supposed to promote urban gardening in Rome, and a 'green' agenda based on communities' self-organization and the re-use of abandoned land, end up paradoxically constraining CBIs due to several tensions in local policy-making and due to ambivalent interpretations of the socio-political meaning of community gardening.

Chapter 7 focuses on a case study in the city of Berlin, and explores how applying for and maintaining a legal form implies several requirements, adaptations and isomorphic pressures on CBIs, and how they deal with such a constraining factor using social capital, internal agreements, and umbrella organizations.

Chapter 8 discusses the role CBIs play in reconnecting citizens to their local resources and in balancing representative and participatory democracy. The Chapter focuses on recent reforms in Scotland which have addressed long standing issues like a skewed pattern of land ownership, the local democracy deficit and the empowerment of community organizations, with ambivalent results.

Chapter 9 takes, again, Scotland as a case study, to investigate the difficulties many community initiatives face in order to access public funding, how this influences – both positively and negatively – community initiatives, and how their functioning and organizational model need to adapt and change.

Chapter 10 discusses how environmental and innovation policies - in the form of regulations, incentives, and the general political discourse - impact community energy organizations in Finland, and how these initiatives navigate a rapidly changing policy environment which is, especially at the local level, increasingly favourable for community initiatives and energy cooperatives.

The last case study in Chapter 11 is dedicated to Romania, and focuses on how national policies on the prevention and recycling of waste affect community organizing in this domain, by both widening and restricting the space for grassroots initiatives and their role in local and sectoral environmental governance.

Based on the general evidence gathered during the TESS project, the eight case studies described above, and a discussion among between TESS project partners, the final Chapter

presents and discusses ten policy recommendations. Five of these policy recommendations regard general policy issues which are, however, particularly problematic for CBIs: the need to ensure long-term predictable policies; to improve information, transparency, accountability in policy-making; the need to simplify procedures and bureaucracy; to harmonize laws and regulations; to ensure coherence in the implementation of policies. The last five policy recommendations are instead about policy issues which are more specifically targeted to CBIs: a proposal to establish or to improve a permanent dialogue between CBIs and public authorities; to remove barriers many CBIs face in their access to public funding; to improve CBIs' access to assets; to increase training information and knowledge for and around CBIs; and finally to 'invert the mindset', i.e. to acknowledge the role of CBIs as a source of political empowerment, rather than as something that needs public support or top down encouragement.

These policy recommendations are discussed referring to several examples of 'best' and 'worst' practices, and are directed towards institutions at different scales with an aim to enable CBIs' potential for a transition towards societal sustainability.

To conclude, CBIs are crucial sites of subsidiarity, multi-level governance, and alternative social practices, whose autonomy should be fully guaranteed. This is crucial in order to avoid an interpretation of CBIs as mere substitutes in taking charge of societal challenges which public institutions are no longer able to address, while safeguarding their ambition to address these challenges differently.

2 Introduction

The research presented in this Deliverable aims to explore the relations between public policies and CBIs which experiment with grassroots approaches for the promotion of a sustainable transition in Europe. The aims are, firstly, to extract some general evidence from the research conducted so far and, secondly, to identify and investigate policy environments at multiple scales which are particularly conducive and supportive for CBIs to diffuse and persist or, on the contrary, that act as impediments and barriers for community activism and grassroots innovation.

Although formally autonomous from public institutions, the self-organization of communities does not occur in an institutional and political vacuum. Some CBIs may be more or less the direct consequence of some policy scheme, or merely recipients of public funding. In other cases, the lack of specific policies and regulations, or their inadequacy, heavily constrains the emergence and upscaling of CBIs. There is also the frequent case of initiatives that flourish precisely because of the “empty space” resulting from the inertia of the public institutions in promoting sustainability, alternative economic practices and social innovation. Some CBIs have long-standing and friendly relationships with public institutions. Others are instead much more confrontational, adverse and alternative. In any case, the relation between public policies and community organizing is crucial, but research that focuses specifically on this relation is scarce and the findings are controversial, as will be seen in the Chapter 3.

In order to explore such relations adequately, the research presented hereafter focuses on existing policies and institutional strategies that have an enabling or disabling influence on CBIs, and identifies a lack of policies and adequate incentives that may negatively affect the emergence and development of initiatives. The research is based on some general evidence primarily extracted from a survey of 63 CBIs in Europe operating in the domains of food, energy, mobility and waste, in six city-regions in Europe, conducted during the years 2015 and 2016. Moreover, we present the results of eight case studies regarding specific policy issues or political environments, based on face-to-face interviews with CBIs and local stakeholders.

The selection of these case studies was based on previous activities in the TESS project, and specifically the survey, which allowed for the identification of areas and contexts where public policies play a role in enabling or constraining CBIs, providing adequate regulations, funding, agreements, indirect support, collaboration or legitimation, or not. The aim of the case studies is to investigate specific policy relevant issues that affect CBIs and reflect upon which measures are (or are not) proposed by institutions at different scales to address these critical issues.

Despite differences in the foci and scope of the various case studies, some common features of those policy environments are identified: the role CBIs play in the design, implementation and governance of these policies; the positive and negative effects of these policies on CBIs; the different affects they have on various types of CBIs and organizations; the more general role CBIs play within the political, institutional and governance context in which they operate; several actual and potential tensions and contradictions among different scales of governance.

The aim is to extract findings which are of relevance for advancing the state-of-the-art research on the topic as well as identifying policy recommendations to support the role of CBIs in each specific context.

The policy issues discussed in the report refer, on the one hand, to very practical difficulties grassroots initiatives face: accessing and controlling the spaces and assets needed to run the initiatives; finding an appropriate legal status; relying, although not excessively, on public funding; dealing with transparent, coherent and suitable regulations; and, finally, having a voice in the governance of policy areas which are of major concern to them. On the other hand, investigating how these challenges are managed in practice is useful for highlighting more general tensions between grassroots initiatives and public institutions, how these tensions are negotiated within more or less favourable policy environments, and how similar initiatives react, adapt and behave differently.

2.1 Methodology

This report does not refer to any unifying theoretical or methodological framework, as each analysis is developed along its own premises. In general, the research attempts to bring together two often divergent perspectives: policy-oriented research and more critical inquiries about the relationship between grassroots activism and political institutions in an age of neoliberalism. The aim is to problematize the ambivalent relationships between grassroots initiatives and public policies by presenting both exemplar cases and more general reflections and policy recommendations.

The first step of this research was to conduct a literature review, aimed at the identification of research questions of common relevance in different countries and different domains of community engagement, on the relationship between public institutions, policies and politics, with community-based initiatives.

The second step was the analysis of the survey conducted within TESS activities on 63 CBIs located in the TESS countries (Finland, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain and the UK). The results of this analysis confirm the relevance of policy and politics for CBIs all over Europe, and offer some general information on how the policy environment is perceived and experienced by CBIs in Europe. Moreover, the results of the survey allowed for some issues which are particularly problematic in the different contexts to be highlighted, in order to guide the selection of case studies. These issues include the assignment of vacant spaces for temporary use (developed in Chapter 4 analysing the cases of Rome and Barcelona), policy mechanisms affecting alternative food networks (analysed in Chapter 5 for the case of Barcelona), ambiguities in policies and practices of community gardening (presented in Chapter 6 with a focus on the case of Rome), the problem of legal status of CBIs (developed in Chapter 7 for the case of Berlin), the issue of local empowerment and democratic governance (addressed in Chapter 8 for the case of Scotland), the effects of public funding on CBIs (developed in Chapter 9 with a focus on Scotland), the role of public policies on community initiatives operating in the field of energy (investigated in Chapter 10 with a case

study focused on Finland) and in the field of waste (developed in Chapter 11 with a case study focused on Romania).

As a third step, case studies were developed autonomously by each partner. Some case studies are also based on the interviews conducted within other parts of the TESS project; but most of them are based – although not exclusively - on *ad hoc* interviews, carried out for the policy analysis. The adopted methodology (including a detailed indication of interviews and other sources) is presented in each chapter. Despite the lack of a unifying theoretical and methodological framework, the case studies were conducted by each partner on the basis of a common and agreed upon set of guidelines, which can be summarized in the following: (i) the contributions should stress why the selected topic was of relevance for community based initiatives as well as for advancing the state-of-the-art of scientific research on the topic; and (ii) each contribution should describe, discuss, contextualize, problematize and assess the policy environment, based mainly on face-to-face interviews to policy makers, stakeholders, experts and eventually CBIs, complemented by secondary sources.

A list of topics to be covered in the interviews was agreed upon prior to the interviews, including topics such as the role of CBIs in the design/implementation of a certain policy measure; the effects of the policy framework (or lack of) on CBIs; the governance context as well as the (potential) selectivity of the policy environment. Finally, the research teams were asked to provide a discussion and some findings from the case studies, with the aim – inter alia – to extract some general and specific policy recommendations addressed to policy-makers, experts and practitioners, and some knowledge which is of a more general relevance for advancing the state-of-the-art of research and public debates on the topic.

All the case study contributions are based on a similar scheme and are focused on a similar research questions regarding the ambivalent relationships between grassroots initiatives and public policies. Research questions include the following: To what extent different CBIs rely on external and public support, insofar as previous research has documented a wide variety of cases? To what extent do CBIs actively attempt to strengthen their relationships, collaborate or receive support from public institutions? To what extent, how and with what results, do community organizations have a role in the wider policy communities and governance mechanisms? When and why does an inadequacy, or lack, of public policies act as an impediment to the emergence, functioning and upscaling of CBIs? Why and to are different CBIs not equally supported by public institutions? May community organizing be said to *complement* institutional efforts towards a sustainable transition or, on the contrary, *substitute* public authorities and legitimate a “roll-back” of public institutions from their responsibilities? Based on this common framework, the case studies adopt different approaches and perspectives depending on the characteristics of the different objectives of analysis, as well as on the different foci adopted by the researchers in the various contexts and countries.

Based on the results of the case study research and of the activities conducted previously within the TESS project, several policy recommendations are identified for institutions, at different levels, that wish to support CBIs in their efforts towards a sustainable transition. The

specific methodology adopted for the identification of these policy recommendations is presented in Chapter 12.

2.2 Structure of the report

Chapter 3, “Enabling/disabling policy environments for community organizing and grassroots transitions” introduces the literature review and the research questions that guided the elaboration of this report. Moreover, the chapter reports the policy-relevant evidence extracted from the survey on 63 CBIs involved in the TESS project.

Chapter 4, “Policies and strategies for the temporary use of abandoned spaces” discusses the policy regimes in Rome and Barcelona for the assignment of empty spaces to social initiatives, regarded as a low-cost form of urban regeneration, and in light of a massive wave of occupations prompted by social and neighbourhood movements in recent years.

Chapter 5, “Policy mechanisms affecting alternative food networks: promoting distinctive products and leisure-based commercialization as a form of rural development” analyses the multi-level institutional framework in which alternative food networks operate in order to, on the one hand, identify contradictions between scales of governance and, on the other hand, to highlight how initiatives adapt differently, with a specific focus on Barcelona.

Chapter 6, “The policing of community gardening in Rome”, shows how regulations which are supposed to promote urban gardening and a ‘green’ agenda based on communities’ self-organization and the re-use of abandoned land, end up paradoxically constraining community initiatives due to several tensions in local policy-making and ambiguities in interpreting the political meaning of community gardening.

Chapter 7, through a case study focused on Berlin, “The shaping of community-based sustainability initiatives through resource dependence, coercive isomorphism, and legal form requirements” explores how applying for and maintaining a legal form affects community initiatives during their life-cycle, and how they deal with such a constraining factor using social capital, internal agreements, and umbrella organizations.

Chapter 8, “Community empowerment and local democratic governance” discusses the role community initiatives play in reconnecting citizens to their local resources and in balancing representative and participatory democracy. The research focuses on recent reforms in Scotland which addressed the symptoms rather than the root causes of a substantial local democratic deficit, risking the empowerment of the already powerful.

Chapter 9, “The Trials and Tribulations of Public Funding: Shaping the Aspirations and Innovations of Community-based Initiatives for Sustainability” discusses the challenges many community initiatives face in order to access public funding. Taking Scotland as a case study, the article critically investigates how accessing both national and European funding influences community organizing, focusing on both enabling and constraining factors.

Chapter 10, “Energy co-operatives as community-based initiatives: public-private partnership in the framework of formal and informal institutional constraints and opportunities in a rural community in North Karelia in Eastern Finland” discusses how environmental and innovation policies - in the form of regulations, incentives, and the general political discourse - impact community energy initiatives in Finland, and how these initiatives navigate a rapidly changing policy environment.

Chapter 11, “Waste policies and community-based initiatives in Romania” investigates Romanian national policies on the prevention and recycling of waste and how they affect community organizing in this domain, by both widening and restricting the space for grassroots initiatives and their role in local and sectoral environmental governance.

Finally, Chapter 12, “Policy recommendations for a community-based sustainability transition” identifies both specific and general policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the potential contribution of community-based initiatives for a transition towards more sustainable European societies.

3 Enabling and disabling policy environments for community organizing and grassroots transitions

This chapter presents a literature review with the aim of discussing the state-of-the-art research on the relationship between CBIs and public policies, and identifying potential gaps and research questions. Subsequently, we present a summary of the evidence emerged from the cross-European survey of 63 community-based initiatives which are active in the domain of food, mobility, waste or energy, regarding their relations and perceptions about the policy environment in which they operate, and specific policy-related enabling and disabling issues.

3.1 Community-based initiatives and public policies: literature review and research questions

Although research focusing specifically on the relations between CBIs and public policies is scarce, a lot of interesting evidence and reflections can be found in the extensive body of work on sustainability transitions, grassroots innovation, community organizing in general and social movements, or regarding some specific domain of community engagement such as alternative food networks, community energy, etc. This literature has largely investigated the enabling or constraining role of public institutions in different sectors (e.g. land use, environment, etc.) for CBIs to emerge, persist and diffuse.

The literature review presented in these pages allowed for the identification of six research questions that have guided and inspired the research conducted within each case study. The appropriateness and relevance of each research question varies in the different contexts and sectors, and each case study focuses on one or more of the topics that emerge in this introduction.

First of all, it should be highlighted that public policies can support CBIs in many ways. They can offer advice, funding and economic incentives (Jaccard et al. 1997), agreements and collaborations, adaptation of regulations and permission schemes (Walker 2008), the use of vacant public spaces and buildings, etc. Therefore, the first research question is “to what extent different CBIs rely on external and public support, insofar as previous research has documented a wide variety of cases?” A related research question is “to what extent do CBIs actively attempt to strengthen their relationships, collaborate or receive support from public institutions?”

Existing evidence is controversial in this regard. Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) have documented that food justice initiatives have not been successful in mobilizing or involving diverse food system stakeholders. Moreover some local projects perceive a risk of capture and instrumentality in their relations with more powerful actors (Smith and Seyfang 2013). Consequently, many of those initiatives explicitly refuse any kind of support or collaboration, in order to reaffirm their autonomy and alterity, or fearing they will become ‘arms’ of the state (Ghose and Pettyglove 2014). While some CBIs explicitly pursue autonomy and self-

sufficiency within their communities or groups, other initiatives actively seek relationships with public institutions as they see this as crucial to influencing other communities/actors, transforming the current socio-political regime, or promoting a wider diffusion of alternative practices and social innovations (Tornaghi 2014; Mason and Whitehead 2012). This latter group of initiatives are, consequently, more open and collaborative, especially in order to obtain public funding, or with the more general aim of influencing the political agenda. In this respect, local and municipal authorities are especially crucial and are very often the main stakeholder for CBIs, while national policies and laws play a key role only in specific fields such as energy or waste.

A third and related research question is, “to what extent, how and with what results, do community organizations have a role in the wider policy communities and governance mechanisms?” While in some cases, as already mentioned, community activists explicitly refuse any relation with public (or private) actors, in other cases researchers have examined the emergence of networked movements linking community advocates, small and large public agencies, social justice groups, staff of local government and municipal politicians (see Wekerle 2004 about Toronto). As reported by Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012), 83% of transition initiatives have begun the process to “build a bridge to local government” (2012: 391). Those external relations are also, often, crucial to the survival and diffusion of CBIs, as reported by Hess (2013).

Public institutions and public policies, on the other hand, may sometimes be a major constraint for the emergence and development of CBIs, due to the inadequacy or lack of appropriate regulations and policy schemes. A fourth research question is, therefore, “when and why does an inadequacy, or lack, of public policies act as an impediment to the emergence, functioning and upscaling of CBIs?”

In other cases, such a lack of adequate public policies may trigger community activism. In many fields, e.g., waste and energy, CBIs are often developed in the context of government failure to provide adequate services (Beall 1997; Chakrabarti et al. 2009), or a more general societal and sustainable transition. However, the relationship between community activists and public authorities, in those cases, is often problematic (Luckin and Sharp 2004; Zurbrügg et al. 2004; Pasang et al. 2007; Davies 2007). Public policies (or the lack thereof) are often indicated as responsible for the (unsustainable) situation that initiatives seek to react to and oppose (Smith and Kurtz 2003). In the domain of food, for example, governments are often accused of being responsible for supporting the current industrialized, commodity-based food system against which alternative food networks stand (Conner and Levine 2007, p. 13).

Moreover, the same policy environment may have different positive or negative effects on different CBIs. Generally speaking, the ability of CBIs to access the potential advantage of a supportive policy environment can be highly variable. For small and poorly organized CBIs, for example, accessing financial support, if even available, may be extremely difficult. In the field of renewable energy, for example, during the 2000s the UK government included non-profit domestic and non-profit community renewable projects as eligible for grant support, but the policy was designed primarily to support large-scale projects and turned out to be inadequate

for CBIs (Hain et al. 2005). Moreover, not every political authority or public institution equally supports every kind of CBI. There's a 'selective support' by policy-makers which needs to be scrutinized both in order to fully understand the policy impact of these initiatives, and to better understand their complexity and diversity. In general, some authors have stressed the general risk aversion of policy makers when dealing with small-scale, often radical, and relatively informal innovating organisations (Hargreaves et al. 2013). In the field of waste, for example, Davies (2007) noted that community-based recycling organisations in Ireland are marginalised from waste policy development and implementation. An additional research question is, therefore, "why and to are different CBIs not equally supported by public institutions?"

Moreover, bottom-up and grassroots initiatives are flourishing side-by-side with a number of top-down, policy-driven and publicly funded initiatives which have the same goals and characteristics, but "with little or nothing in common" (Tornaghi 2014: 563), meaning both that the two typologies do not interact, and that they are different in many respects.

A final and more subtle research question relates to whether community organizing may be said to *complement* institutional efforts towards a sustainable transition or, on the contrary, *substitute* public authorities and legitimate a "roll-back" of public institutions from their responsibilities. Policy-oriented research on the topic is usually much more positive and sees the activity of CBIs as an additional and necessary complement to states' efforts to promote sustainability (Armstrong 2000; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004). From a more critical perspective, the self-organization of communities may be said to take up tasks that are ultimately the responsibility of political institutions and to support a more general "hollowing-out" of the State. The more collaborative and less confrontational initiatives, consequently, have been accused of justifying or supporting a neoliberal agenda, in that community activism and volunteering replace the role of formal political institutions in the promotion of sustainability (in the case of food, see: Tornaghi 2014; Baker 2004; Rosol 2012; Knigge 2009; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014; McClintock 2014). More generally, the increasing activism and autonomy of communities in pursuing sustainability can be interpreted as an expression of a more general 'rescaling' of urban ecological policies (Hodson and Marvin 2009; Whitehead 2013) - i.e. ecological responsibilities shift from upper scales (states and municipal authorities) to communities and individuals - or even as a form of "governing through community" (Rosol 2012, p. 251). Transition to a more sustainable future, according to these authors, requires more profound "structural change and not just changes in individual or community behaviour" (Mason and Whitehead 2012: 500).

While most of the above mentioned research focuses on specific localities and/or a particular domains of activity (e.g. alternative food networks), as well as single initiatives, the current Deliverable benefits from the large, cross-European, multi-dimensional, multi-domain and comparative approach adopted by the TESS project. This approach permits to extract some more general evidence, which is presented in the next section.

3.2 The relation of community-based initiatives with public policies: evidence from the survey

This section is aimed to present some information on the relation between CBIs and the policy environments in which they are active. This evidence is extracted from the results of a survey conducted among 63 European initiatives in Italy, Spain, Germany, Scotland, Finland and Romania.

The survey allows for the exploration of various crucial issues. The first of these issues is to what extent CBIs are driven by 'political' aims. To this end, each CBI was asked to rate the degree of importance of "political mobilization" among the aims of the initiative, and to self-assess the degree of achievement of this aim: Table 1 shows a summary of the results. The first column includes the description of how each aim was presented to CBIs, and columns 2, 3 and 4, respectively, show the degree of relevance of each aim, its importance and the self-assessed degree of achievement. The aims are ranked based on the average degree of importance.

<i>Aim</i>	<i>Description of the aim</i>	<i>Relevance (% yes)</i>	<i>Degree of importance (1-10)</i>	<i>Degree of achievement (1-10)</i>
Environmental awareness	Raising environmental awareness among members/local community/population	90%	8.7	6.7
Carbon efficiency	Using natural resources more efficiently; Reducing waste	95%	8.6	7.1
Social innovation	To promote new/different/more sustainable behaviours, life styles, social practices	92%	8.6	6.9
Local economic impact	To revitalize the local/community economy, and/or to improve the self-sufficiency of the local community	66%	8.5	6.5
Carbon reduction	Combating climate change: reducing greenhouse gases/offsetting emissions	93%	8.4	6.4
Human capital	To provide learning occasions/infrastructure, diffuse skills/knowledge and/or to enhance the skills of participants	79%	8.4	7.3
Social inclusion	To involve/help/integrate/reach a diversity of beneficiaries (in terms of class, ethnicity, gender), including disadvantaged people	77%	8.4	6.7

<i>Aim</i>	<i>Description of the aim</i>	<i>Relevance (% yes)</i>	<i>Degree of importance (1-10)</i>	<i>Degree of achievement (1-10)</i>
Financial sustainability	To develop/experiment/demonstrate a well-functioning business/organizational model	75%	8.3	6.4
Economic benefits	To deliver material benefits to participants, e.g., quality goods at lower prices	79%	8.2	7.4
Empowerment	To enable participants and the local community to have more capabilities to improve their daily lives	87%	8.1	7.1
Social capital	To stimulate/promote social interactions/networking between participants and with the local community	95%	8.0	6.9
Innovativeness	To create/improve/diffuse innovations, product and service delivery to respond to a demand which is unfulfilled in the market	65%	7.8	6.8
Political mobilisation	To mobilise people towards a shared political goal, to promote social/political change and influence the political agenda	65%	7.2	5.8
Networking with CBIs	To build/strengthen a network of engaged/similar initiatives/communities	84%	7.0	6.2
Networking with collective actors	To build/support/create/engage a network of) other (political) actors/organizations/institutions	71%	7.0	6.1

Table 1 – How CBIs perceive the relevance, importance and degree of achievement of several aims

Political mobilization – mobilizing people towards a shared political goal (e.g., to promote social/political change and influence the political agenda, push for policy reforms, etc.) – is considered a relevant aim for only 65% of CBIs; this aim ranks, therefore, as the least relevant for community organizations. Among those CBIs for which this aim is relevant, again, the degree of importance of political mobilization is one of the lowest rated aims, with respect to the others. This evidence suggests that the political dimension for CBIs in Europe, at least according to the evidence extracted from our survey, is relevant and important per se, as most research on the topic suggests, but much less than other dimensions of community engagement.

Moreover, 71% of the initiatives are committed to creating or engaging with a wider network of political, institutional or collective actors and organizations. Similar to what is stated above, this confirms that establishing links or even collaborating with public institutions or collective

actors is both relevant and important in absolute terms. Relatively to the other aims, however, this is one of the least important aims.

In terms of the extent to which ‘politically engaged’ CBIs are satisfied with the results of their ‘political’ activities, i.e. the degree of achievement of the ‘political’ aims, these two aims (political mobilisation, and external networking with collective actors) rank the lowest, relative to the perceived degree of achievement, with respect to the other aims. What this evidence shows, in sum, is that the political dimension is somehow important for CBIs, but most of their efforts are directed towards other goals and, even among the most politically-oriented initiatives, results are perceived as very poor.

	<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Community initiatives</i>
Social capital	7.9	8.0
Human capital externalities	7.8	8.4
External networking	7.7	7.0
Political mobilisation	7.0	7.2
Local economic impact	6.6	8.5
Social inclusion	6.5	8.4
Innovativeness	6.5	7.8
Financial sustainability	6.2	8.3
Carbon efficiency	6.1	8.6
Carbon reduction	5.8	8.4

Table 2 – Importance of ten aims of community-based initiatives according to different actors

Table 2 shows how these same aims are perceived as more or less important by external stakeholders, as compared to CBIs¹. This data was collected during Task 4.3 and aimed at extracting the preferences (values) to be used as weights in the Multi-Criteria Analysis of CBIs presented in Deliverable 4.2. It is worth highlighting that the political activities and political potential of CBIs are perceived as more or less equally important by external stakeholders and CBIs. However, relative to other aims and areas of impact, “political mobilization” ranks fourth in terms of importance according to stakeholders, while it ranks penultimate according to CBIs, as already mentioned. In the case of “external networking” (in this case, both external

¹ The data presented here and in Table 1 do not perfectly correspond: there have been some adjustments in the data. For more information and a detailed description, refer to the the general methodology behind the table, as described in Deliverable 4.2.

networking with collective actors and other CBIs), this aim or dimension is acknowledged as the third most relevant according to stakeholders, and as the least important according to CBIs. Quite surprisingly, therefore, external stakeholders seem to attribute much more importance to the 'political' dimension of CBIs than initiatives themselves.

Beside these perceptions and expectations, the survey provides some additional evidence regarding the actual content of CBIs' political activities and their relationships with public institutions and other collective actors. Firstly, we collected information about which specific political or collective actors are part of the CBIs' external networks, as well as the aims and intensity of such relationships and collaborations². In particular, each CBI was first asked to name all their relationships with any 'collective actors'; they were then asked to rate the importance of each tie ("not at all important", "not very important", "somewhat important", "very important", "extremely important/vital"), intended to act as a measure of the intensity of the relationships. The results are summarized in Table 3 in terms of the total number of relationships of collaboration for the whole sample of CBIs, and the average degree of importance that CBIs assigned to those collaborations.

<i>Type of actor</i>	<i>Number of relationships</i>	<i>Average importance (from 0 to 1)</i>
Intermediary network organizations	82	0.67
Local public bodies	58	0.82
Local/community/neighbourhood associations	46	0.72
Educational, research centres, students associations	37	0.70
NGOs	37	0.66
National public bodies	32	0.81
Regional public bodies	30	0.79
Social and political movements	29	0.66
Political organizations (e.g., parties), interest groups, trade unions	8	0.65
Firm associations	7	0.74
International public bodies	2	0,80
Religious entities	1	0,40

Table 3 – Total number and average importance of the relationships between CBIs and each type of collective actor

² For further insights and details on the external collaborations, see Chapter 10 of Deliverable 4.1.

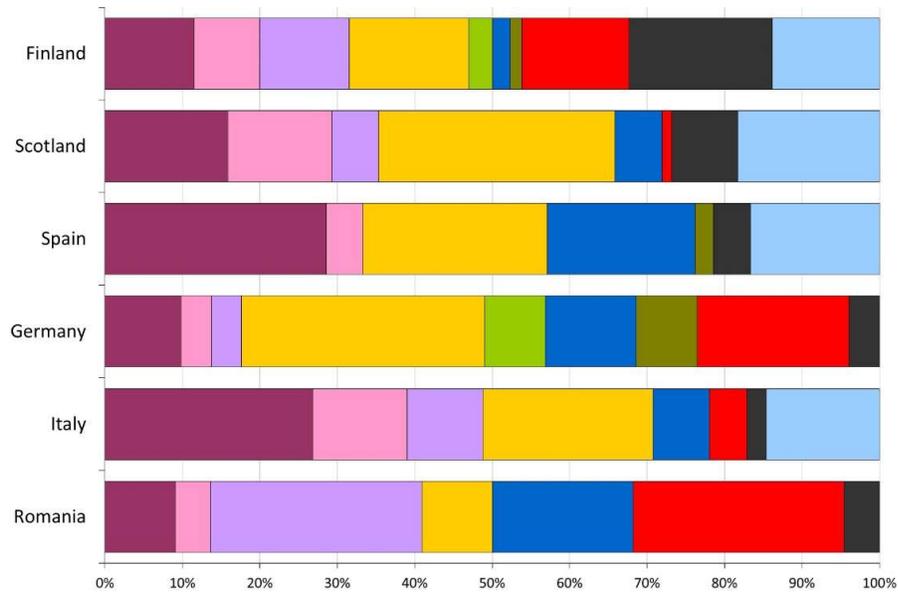


Figure 1.a – Types of external collaborations between CBIs and collective actors, per CBI's country.

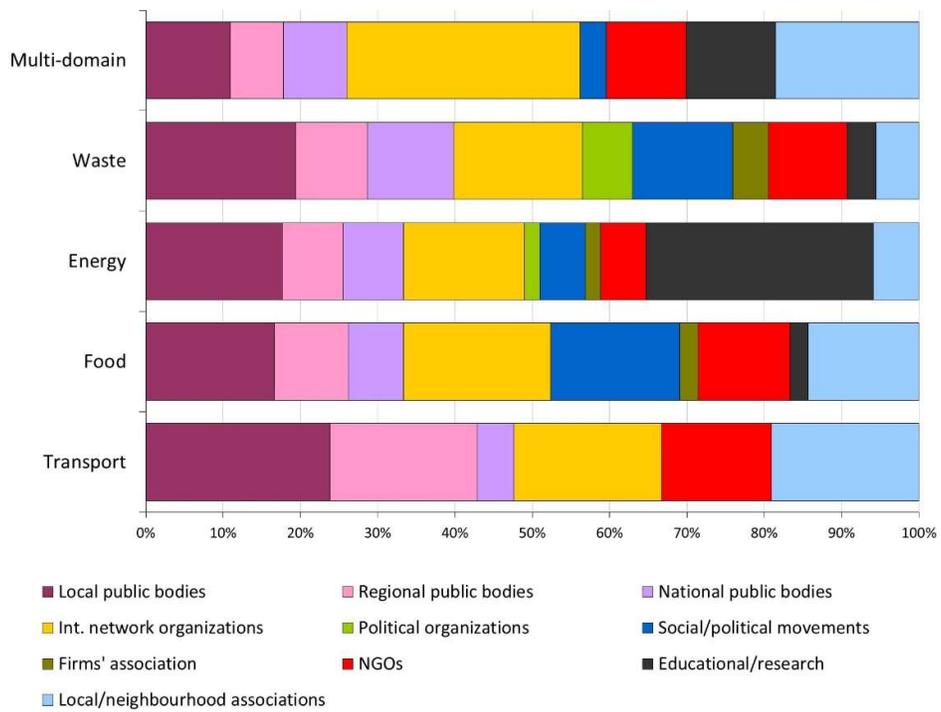


Figure 1.b – Types of external collaborations between CBIs and collective actors, per CBI's domain.

In Figure 1, *a* and *b*, the same data is presented for each domain of the initiatives, and per country of the CBI, in order to highlight the variability of the structure of external collaborations.

Overall, this evidence shows that the majority of collaborations are between CBIs and intermediary network organizations, i.e. umbrella networks that coordinate the activity of similar initiatives, e.g., the Italian network of solidarity purchasing groups, the Transition Network, the Global Ecovillage Network, etc. The second most number of links are between CBIs and local public authorities. However, when all levels of government are considered together – i.e. all public bodies: local, regional, national and international – the number of relationships between CBIs and all public bodies accounts for the vast majority of CBIs' external collaborations (122). Each CBI averages nearly two collaborations with public bodies. More importantly, the importance of relationships with all levels of public bodies is by far the highest among all possible types of collective actors: according to CBIs, 76% of collaborations with all public bodies are considered “very important” or “extremely important/vital”; 72% of collaborations with local public bodies are, considered either “very” or “extremely” important and 38% “extremely important”. None of these collaborations are considered not important at all.

To summarize, 70% of CBIs in our sample consider it relevant to establish a link with collective and political actors; 60% have established some kind of relationship of collaboration with some kind of public body, and 76% of those collaborations with public bodies are considered, at the least, very important for the initiative; almost one-third of these relationships are seen as “vital”. This evidence clearly establishes the frequency, intensity and importance of CBIs' relationships with public bodies.

When it comes to the relation between CBIs and specific public policies, however, the picture becomes less clear and more problematic. With regard to public policies, information gathered in the survey sheds light on the extent to which CBIs have received support from public institutions or policies that was relevant for their emergence or development; or, on the contrary, the extent to which their persistence and development was constrained by some specific policy measure, or the lack of policy, or because of the general policy environment.

As summarized in Table 4 below, a minority of CBIs (17%) acknowledged a completely positive policy framework, recognizing public policies as relevant for their emergence or development, as well as having reported no specific policy obstacles. On the contrary, nearly twice as many CBIs reported that the policy environment has been strongly disabling, insofar as no public policy has been specifically crucial for their emergence or functioning; instead, some public policies constituted obstacles. Other initiatives reported a more nuanced relation with public institutions but, in general, it is clear that almost half of CBIs recognize the important role played by public policies for their emergence and functioning, whereas more CBIs (62%) have experienced some kind of policy obstacle.

In Chapter 4 of Deliverable 4.1, we summarized some of the evidence that has emerged from the analysis of policy obstacles or support. In particular, most of the obstacles are attributed to local policies, while supporting policies are more evenly distributed across the various levels

of government. In both cases, however, the local scale of policy-making is confirmed as the most crucial.

		<i>Are/were laws, public policies and administrative procedures a relevant obstacle for the initiative?</i>		
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Are/were laws, public policies and public funding relevant for the initiative's emergence or development?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	30%	17%	47%
	<i>No</i>	32%	21%	53%
	<i>Total</i>	62%	38%	100%

Table 4 – Positive and negative impacts of public policies on community-based initiatives

In terms of sources of support, four areas of policy have been identified: the most important is economic development and tax/financial incentives, followed by community or social development; environment, transport or food regulations; and, to a lesser extent, property rights and access to land/assets/buildings. The predominant form of policy support is public funding, mostly from municipalities, but also from national or European institutions. Public funding is especially crucial for CBIs in Scotland and Finland and, according to activity domain, community energy, and to a lesser extent waste. The survey provides additional evidence regarding the extent to which CBIs rely on public funding. In particular, in the last year, almost one-third of CBIs have relied on (public) grants to cover their costs. In 40% of those cases, public grants covered a very small portion of total costs (less than 1%), but in the remaining cases, grants covered from 40% to 100% of total costs. Moreover, only two out of 20 CBIs who received public grants reported that they were not able to cover costs, while CBIs who didn't received public grants are by far more often unable to cover their costs.

In terms of countries, the most favourable policy environment emerged in Scotland: all but one Scottish initiative received some sort of direct (funding) or indirect (laws) support from national and municipal authorities. Half of the Finnish initiatives benefited from public support, funding in particular. EU funding has an important role in Finland as well as in Romania. In Germany, Italy and Spain the policy environment is regarded as less relevant and/or more problematic. While in the great majority of cases, even in the most 'problematic' contexts, initiatives are interested in receiving public funding in any case, there are cases where CBIs are not seeking this. The reason is that, in most cases, applying for and obtaining such funding is difficult, requiring constant effort and adaptations. In other cases, the reason for not seeking public funding is ideological, insofar as one of the driving aims of some initiatives is to reaffirm their autonomy from the State. These initiatives are often part of wider social movements that oppose and protest against the existing political regime and, consequently, refuse any

relationship with it. However, according to our findings, these cases are probably less widespread than the existing literature suggests.

Another form of public support exists in the form of specific laws or regulations that facilitate an initiative's emergence or functioning. In most cases, this refers to national laws that regulate and promote community organization in general (e.g., laws about cooperatives; laws that allow the destination of personal taxes to social initiatives; laws on volunteering; community 'rights to buy' legislation, etc.), or that address specific sectors (e.g., renewable energies, or recycling). Many initiatives refer to the specific and positive role of municipalities and municipal regulations. One example, is in those municipalities where CBIs are allowed to use public spaces and buildings for their own activities. When this opportunity is lacking, this is perceived by CBIs as a relevant obstacle to be overcome. Another example of a positive policy environment, is that of cities or regions involving CBIs in the governance of environmental policies, for example, in the design and implementation of a local Agenda 21. Other initiatives regard a "supportive political environment," more generally, as important for their emergence and development. Supportive environments are identified in contexts where public institutions are particularly sensitive towards sustainability issues, or social inclusion, and where there is a positive narration of CBIs offered by the media.

In terms of policy obstacles, four key sectors have been identified. The most cited are regulations and laws that impose requirements in terms of organizational structure, legal status, or volunteering. The second most oft-cited is about the unavailability or difficulties in accessing public funding. The third relates to property, assets and the temporary use of vacant/abandoned (public) spaces. Finally, some difficulties emerged from sectoral policies about the environment, mobility, health, etc. The picture is much more mixed in this case, with respect to that of favourable policy environments.

Often, public institutions at different scales are simply accused of "not doing enough" to support CBIs. Examples may include lack of investments in ad hoc infrastructure, lack of priority and support given to the issues at the core of the CBI's activity (in particular at the municipal level), lack of specific or effective policies regarding volunteer labour or social organizations, ambiguity in the interpretation of public schemes that could support CBIs activities. In some cases, CBIs lament "a not supportive environment" in general, including the difficulty for CBIs to communicate their needs and their everyday difficulties to political representatives, funding agencies or public bodies.

Another category of policy obstacles is identifiable in more specific laws and regulations that create practical, legal and organizational difficulties. In this, several initiatives mention planning regulations as a problem. Moreover, many initiatives cannot rely on permanent occupancy of the land or spaces where activities are carried out, which are sometimes rented, some other times conceded on a temporary basis, either formally or informally, and very rarely owned by the initiative; in some extreme cases, initiatives do not have any legal right to occupy the spaces they occupy. In the case of a temporary, informal, and/or irregular use of spaces, CBIs constantly risk being evicted. This creates a serious concern, in many cases severely limiting the possibility of initiatives to plan and invest in their future. Other initiatives mention specific

laws as constraints regarding, e.g., waste recycle, energy production, food standards, etc., or general laws regarding licensing procedures, the establishment of cooperatives, public contracting, self-employment, specific professions, etc. A big concern shared by several initiatives is the lack of adequate legislation for the recognition of the juridical status of CBIs, especially a major concern in Germany.

This evidence highlights a great variability of cases which need to be further investigated through an in-depth, ad-hoc analysis. The survey was particularly useful, in this regard, in identifying some recurrent, particularly problematic and interesting cases of enabling or disabling policy environments, which led to the selection of case studies discussed in the following chapters.

12 Policy recommendations for a community-based sustainability transition

The relevance of public policies for the emergence, development and (potential) diffusion of CBIs clearly emerged throughout all the research activities of the TESS project, in the form of both specific measures and, more generally, the presence/absence of a favourable policy environment. In Chapter 1 we documented the relevance attributed to policies by CBIs, either as a relevant support or as a barrier for their emergence and/or upscaling. Based on this evidence, this deliverable has developed an in-depth analysis of some specific policy frameworks, attempting to analyse their positive or negative effects on CBIs, also with the aim of identifying policy recommendations which are discussed in this chapter.

As mentioned, our evidence and analysis highlight a great diversity among CBIs in terms of their relationships to policies, as well as among the policy environments in which they operate. In this last regard, there are not only significant differences between countries, but the policy environments also vary within the same country, depending on the different sectors and the different scales concerned. The strategies of different sub-national authorities (counties or municipalities) are particularly relevant, insofar as local level institutions, programs and regulations frequently play a crucial role for CBIs.

In the following pages, 10 main policy recommendations are presented which, if addressed, may strengthen the operating environment for CBIs and consequently enhance their potential to contribute to a societal and sustainable transition. Half of these policy recommendations are general and do not refer specifically to CBIs, although they turned out to be particularly relevant for community organizations. The second half is composed of recommendations that focus on policy issues which refer directly to CBIs.

In the next section, we briefly report on the methodology applied for the identification of these recommendations, while in the following sections each of these are presented and detailed.

12.1 Methodology

The identification of the policy recommendations was based on four consequential steps. The theme was first discussed during the fourth project meeting in January 2016. During the meeting, the TESS project's researchers in charge of the policy analysis brainstormed relevant policy recommendations that could be extracted from the research conducted so far within the TESS project, and based on the interactions other researchers had had with CBIs and stakeholders. The outcome of this exercise was a very rough list of policy recommendations.

In the following months (from January to June 2016), fieldwork for the policy analysis presented in the previous chapters was carried out by all partners and consisted of mostly in-depth interviews with policy-makers, community initiatives and stakeholders, focusing specifically on the relationship between CBIs and public policies. On that basis, each partner was asked to extract some specific policy recommendations, deriving from its case study.

During the fifth project meeting in June 2016, the policy recommendations that emerged from steps described above were collected in a single document, offering the basis for an open, but more structured, discussion. Each project partner was asked to evaluate the relevance and importance of the different policy recommendations, both in general terms and according to the specificity of each of the six countries involved in the project (Finland, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom). The results of this exercise are summarized in Table 19.

<i>Policy issues</i>	<i>Average importance (from least important, 1 to most important, 3)</i>	<i>Country where is considered relevant</i>
Establish a permanent dialogue between CBIs and public authorities	2,8	All
Simplify procedures and bureaucracy	2,8	All
Invert the mindset (communities empower government, not the other way round)	2,8	All
Enhance CBIs' access to property/assets	2,7	All
Create long-term, predictable policies to encourage CBIs' planning	2,7	FI, IT, RO, SP, UK
Design specific policies for specific contexts	2,3	All
Increase flexibility on formal requirements for accessing public funding for small-scale non-profit community-based initiatives	2,3	FI, DE, RO, SP, UK
Improve planning permission guidelines to benefit CBIs	2,3	FI, IT, RO, SP, UK
Increase coherence among different political and institutional levels	2,2	All
Improve information, transparency and accountability in policy-making	2,2	All
Improve CBIs' capacity in accessing public funding	2,2	All
Support/training in facilitation skills for creative community engagement	2,2	All
Create a level playing field which does not disfavour CBIs	2,2	FI, IT, RO, SP, UK
Contribute to CBIs' capacity in raising awareness on sustainability topics	2,0	All

<i>Policy issues</i>	<i>Average importance (from least important, 1 to most important, 3)</i>	<i>Country where is considered relevant</i>
Simplify the public funding landscape	2,0	FI, DE, IT, RO, UK
Educate local administrators on the needs and way of functioning of CBIs	2,0	FI, DE, RO, SP, UK
Support plural-actor governance at local level	1,8	All
Promote the temporary use of abandoned spaces for social purposes	1,8	FI, DE, IT, SP, UK
Launch a conversation about democracy and community organizations	1,8	FI, DE, IT, UK
Remove and lower criteria (e.g. minimum size) to selecting and maintaining an appropriate legal form	1,8	FI, DE, RO
Support/train CBIs in their choice of a legal form	1,8	FI, DE, RO, UK
Support CBIs' financial sustainability in order for them to escape the "dependency cycle" from public funding	1,8	FI, RO, UK
Adopt a more holistic view to consider multiple (environmental, economic, social) aspects	1,7	All
Introduce favourable subsidy arrangements on renewable energy	1,7	FI, RO, SP, UK
Address democratic reform, land reform, planning reform together	1,6	FI, UK
Enact laws that penalize polluters to boost the creation of CBIs	1,5	FI, SP, UK
Address the land price bubble	1,4	FI, SP, UK
Harmonise laws and regulations between countries and at the country and EU level	1,2	FI, DE, IT, RO, SP
Link institutional and financial support to concrete technical criteria rather than political positions and external circumstances	1,2	FI, DE, IT, RO

Table 19 - Assessment of policy recommendations' relevance by the project partners

Based on this exercise and upon some more general discussions between partners, 10 main policy recommendations have been extracted that are relevant for most of the CBIs and for the majority of countries.

12.3 Policy recommendations

The recommendations presented here are directed towards all actors who, at different scales (EU, country level, local level), deal with public policies that affect or may affect CBIs. As mentioned, these recommendations can be grouped into general recommendations and specific recommendations (Table 20).

All the recommendations have the same relevance in general terms, while some of them can be particularly pressing in some countries or institutional levels. These recommendations are firstly addressed in general terms, while the ways some may be particularly relevant in more specific contexts is illustrated by specific examples, both in the main text and in the boxes.

<i>General policy recommendations</i>	<i>Specific policy recommendations</i>
1. Ensure long-term, predictable policies	6. Establish a permanent dialogue between CBIs and public authorities
2. Improve information, transparency, accountability	7. Remove barriers to public funding
3. Simplify procedures and bureaucracy	8. Improve CBIs' access to assets
4. Harmonize laws and regulations	9. Increase information and knowledge for and around CBIs
5. Ensure coherence in the implementation of policies	10. Invert the mindset

Table 20 – Policy recommendations of the TESS project

12.2.1 Ensure long term, predictable policies

Establishing a community-based initiative requires an (often significant) investment in terms of time and money. The level of this investment may vary a lot according to the different sectors in which CBIs operate, as well as on the place where the initiative is established; in any given case, investments are needed for the start-up as well as for the daily functioning and persistence of initiatives.

First of all, the lack of a predictable policy framework may affect the decision to start a CBI, in particular (but not exclusively) in activities that are capital intensive - this is the case, for

example, for CBIs operating in the field of energy or waste treatment. CBIs operating in the field of energy can be highly affected by the predictable availability of, for example, feed-in-tariffs such as those provided by national governments in Germany or the UK. Even CBIs operating in food or mobility need some initial investment to set up the initiative (e.g. investments in infrastructure such as cargo bikes for the transport of goods, or investments for setting up a biological allotment), as well as to keep it operating. Changes in policies can particularly affect initiatives, as many CBIs reported, especially in Germany and Italy.

The lack of a predictable policy framework may negatively affect a CBI's capacity to plan future activities and, consequently, may limit the opportunity, as well as the propensity of these initiatives, to grow or upscale. On the contrary, the existence of a reliable policy framework – which affects both the CBIs' structure and legal form, as well as the specific domain where each CBI operates – not only offers the best possible grounds where CBIs can emerge and grow, but it also gives initiatives the opportunity to engage with long-term strategic planning. Another example is sectoral policies which support or even subsidize community organizations (as well as other organizations) in a particular field; if the time span of this support is too short and/or unpredictable, several problems arise which, in turn, lower the effectiveness of this particular policy.

Regulation of land use offers another good example: given that, in the majority of cases, CBIs do not possess the spaces where they operate and they are often granted only temporary permission to use them, an uncertain and unstable policy environment in this regard may increase their vulnerability and affect their propensity to invest in the continuance and growth of initiatives.

Therefore, the first recommendation is to ensure long-term, predictable policies related to CBIs and in the specific domains where CBIs operate.

The research conducted on energy CBIs in Finland (Chapter 10), showed how the predictability of the formal institutional framework is relevant for the success of initiatives. As the activities of energy co-operatives are money-intensive, in terms of investments needed and pay-back periods, uncertainties in the evolution of policies is highly detrimental for the emergence, development and continuity of community initiatives. Conversely, particularly stable local policies at municipal level – where this exists – allows for long-term planning which turned out to be crucial for further developing the initiatives' activities, investing in them and building trust for the future.

The need for a predictable and stable policy framework also emerged in the case study on community gardening in Rome, Italy (Chapter 0). A substantial lack of clarity regarding the recent regulation on community gardening, as well as about how favourable the general policy environment will be in the future, are perceived as threats and relevant sources of uncertainty by gardeners. The result may be the opposite of what this specific policy aims at: discouraging rather than promoting the emergence, survival, diffusion and regularization of community gardens.

12.2.2 Improve information, transparency, accountability

Information, transparency and accountability are three crucial aspects of any policy environment. The particular relevance of this for CBIs, and their relationship to institutions at different scales, is what is emphasized here.

The need for information, transparency and accountability from the government at different scales is, firstly, a pre-requisite to creating positive relationships between public institutions and CBIs, based on a sense of trust and collaboration. This is especially relevant for CBIs because these are often small-sized and informal organizations who do not have the capacity to access or to interpret policy-related information, or to establish a direct dialogue with public authorities. In the absence of such dialogue, some CBIs have several difficulties, as in the case of a recycling CBI in Berlin which found interpreting the laws regarding the liabilities and responsibilities of lending items complicated.

The issue is also connected with the need to ensure a levelled playing field for CBIs in relation to larger scale or other kinds of businesses and organizations operating in similar fields, in order to avoid disfavoured CBIs with respect to better equipped (private) initiatives. An example is the need to define transparent criteria for allocating the types of support that public institutions might offer, which many of the CBIs investigated during the project lamented is not the case.

Moreover, predictability of public policies is not only particularly relevant as far as public assets are concerned (as mentioned in the previous recommendation), but also for information on the destination and use of public assets, and on the ways in which citizens can participate in their management. These are crucial for the emergence and/or survival of many CBIs. Consequently, the lack of transparency and information may seriously undermine the activities of CBIs and, more generally, may favour confrontational rather than dialogical attitudes from CBIs in their relation with formal politics.

The need to ensure information, transparency and accountability is particularly evident regarding the destination of vacant public properties for social purposes, as discussed in Chapter 0 in reference to the cases of Rome and Barcelona. According to the study, in order to ensure that this allocation works, transparent and reliable information about, for example, the tenure of land and buildings, their material conditions and, mostly, about how to access these opportunities, is necessary, and which is not always the case.

Another example of the crucial relevance of information and transparency is offered in Chapter 7, focused on the different legal forms that CBIs can assume in Germany, and more precisely in the city of Berlin. The case study highlights how CBIs struggle with a lack of information and clarity on this sensitive and problematic issue, and how this heavily affects the opportunities for growth and development for smaller initiatives, in particular.

12.2.3 Simplify procedures and bureaucracy

The issue of bureaucratic complexity is undoubtedly very general but, again, particularly problematic for community organizations that may lack adequate organizational and technical capacities, and are often run informally and by volunteers. The research has documented that complex bureaucracy and procedures indeed represent a crucial obstacle to the emergence and, at times, survival of CBIs. CBIs may be affected by bureaucratic complexity in general, as well as at very specific levels, such as in the case of CBIs operating in the food domain in Germany who reported difficulty in meeting Germany's health and hygiene legislation and in acquiring a health certificate.

The issue is also related to the different forms community self-organization can take. Small and informal CBIs suffer the most because of the complexity of rules and procedures. This issue can discourage the emergence of CBIs and, sometimes, even push them towards situations of illegality. In other cases, it can heavily discourage the growth of CBIs willing to upscale, confining them to a small dimension and marginal role.

The recommendation to simplify procedures and bureaucracy does not necessarily mean to act upon the complex rules and procedures of public policies in general, but to acknowledge the specificities of CBIs and intervene in specific policy schemes by lowering, for example, the administrative requirements for CBIs and similar organizations.

A first example of the specific relevance of the issue for CBIs is that of community gardening in Rome (Chapter 0). The complexity of norms regarding urban planning and, in particular, the preservation of the landscape, is very discouraging for citizens who wish, or undertake, the procedure of setting up a legal community garden/allotment. Consequently, and paradoxically, community gardeners are currently in the position of preferring not to ask for authorization and eventually set up their gardens irregularly. Such complexity is also due to a particularly complicated distribution of responsibilities among different levels of government and between different public bodies, which makes it difficult for a single authority (such as the city), to intervene and provide exhaustive information about, for example, which areas are suitable and available for community gardening.

A different, yet relevant example is the case of Germany (Chapter 7) where adopting a particular legal form implies a number of additional requirements, such as having a certain number of members or fixed charters which created difficulties that were particularly pressing for CBIs.

12.3.4 Harmonize laws and regulations

Generally speaking, CBIs are subject to three main typologies of laws and regulations: laws and regulations concerning their legal status; laws and regulations operating in their specific domain (energy, food, mobility, or waste); laws and regulations related to crucial aspects of their activity (for example, regulations on the assignment of vacant spaces, on the use of land,

sectoral policies, etc.). Moreover, CBIs usually have to deal with rules defined at different scales, from the local to the EU.

Community-based initiatives are often constrained by the lack of harmonization among these rules and regulations. Firstly, there is often a lack of coherence between laws and regulation regarding different domains of activity. Secondly, there are vast differences among CBIs operating in different countries of Europe, while harmonization of their status might enhance their position and role within the EU institutional framework, as well as cross-country replication. Finally, differences can exist even between regulations within the same country in different localities. These differences make it difficult for a CBI (or the specific practice it promotes) to diffuse/be diffused from one place to another, to be replicated elsewhere, or to upscale.

Some very clear examples of these mismatches, and of the ways in which they affect CBIs, can be found in the food domain where CBIs, for example, save food waste from supermarkets and are faced with different country rules in terms of hygiene and conservation; or in the waste domain where the very definition of “waste” can vary among different legislations, affecting the activities of CBIs engaged in recycling.

For all these reasons, harmonization among different laws and regulations should represent a key issue for policy-makers.

In the case of Germany (Chapter 7), the analysis highlights not only how there are requirements and formalities for applying for a legal organizational form that are often unclear, but that they also differ from municipality to municipality. These differences between municipalities can be problematic as some CBIs are helped in their application for a legal form by other CBIs doing similar types of work; while this shows that CBIs can use social capital to gather information and seek assistance, it also highlights the detrimental effects of policy incoherencies.

In Scotland, the case presented in Chapter 9 focused on the enabling and constraining factors of public funding of community initiatives, highlighting how a particularly rigid and risk averse interpretation of the EU State Aid rules by some funders in Scotland has impacted CBIs' abilities to raise the capital funds they need in order to take land and other assets into community ownership.

12.3.5 Ensure coherence in the implementation of policies

This recommendation is connected to the previous one, but it addresses the position and attitudes of single individuals in charge of implementing specific policies and towards CBIs more specifically. Even in a harmonised institutional framework, interpretations and attitudes may vary a lot among institutions or administrative offices, or based on who occupies a particular position from one time to another. These incoherencies can have different dimensions. They may be due to different interpretations and behaviours between different offices within the same public body, or between public institutions operating at different governmental levels, including national and EU institutions. Very often, a lack of coherence

between branches and arms of public intervention exists, which can simply be due to a different attitude towards CBIs expressed by both political representatives – which are additionally periodically changeable – and administrative offices. In some cases, these differences can merely depend on individual preferences, a lack of interest from some specific person, or due to a stigmatization of community organizations.

Many CBIs operating in different domains and in different countries in Europe indeed experience contradictory or disconnected approaches towards them, manifested by different representatives of (even the same) public body. A stronger dialogue among public institutions at all levels is needed in order to offer a reliable and clear policy framework for community organizing, as well as a more widely diffused knowledge about what CBIs are and what they do, in order to avoid misinterpretation or stigma.

The case study about alternative food networks and public policies in Barcelona (Chapter 5) describes the multi-level governance structure in which CBIs operate, highlighting how the disconnection and departmentalization of public authorities, and their often sectoral connotation, produce often an overlap of responsibilities among public institutions, with the effect of doubling efforts and resources. Moreover, a lack of collaboration among institutions is reported: despite common interests and similar programs or objectives, each authority tends to operate autonomously, hindering the development of a unified strategy to support alternative food networks, and frustrating the efforts in this regard.

In the case of Rome (Chapter 0), the specific problems related to community gardens are further exacerbated by internal tensions within the municipality. According to the interviewees, conflicts and a lack of communication are frequent among different offices and between the central municipal offices and the 15 districts in which the city government is articulated - each with its own president, council and administrative structure. These internal tensions affect citizens and associations, making it difficult to identify the right interlocutor and, in the end, making any administrative procedure extremely lengthy and uncertain.

12.3.6 Establish a permanent dialogue between CBIs and public institutions

In order for CBIs to contribute to a transition to a more sustainable society, there is a vital need to encourage dialogue between grassroots initiatives and public authorities. Most CBIs, even the most reluctant towards public institutions and formal politics, reported a need for a venue in which they could express their vision and needs, while public institutions need to learn more about the world of CBIs in order to understand their nature and functioning, the differences between their activities and those of conventional organizations and private companies, and their potential for societal transition. The result of this process should be the full involvement of CBIs in multi-level governance and policy-making.

This dialogue should be established at different scales. However, the local scale undoubtedly represents the crucial laboratory where CBIs and public institution should confront and learn from one another: local governments can use CBIs to better understand social dynamics and

create context-specific policies that address local desires and wishes; CBIs need to frame their activities within a wider picture which can be difficult to achieve without a dialogue with public institutions and other stakeholders. Moreover, many CBIs, such as those in Germany, commented that interacting with political and other collective actors has led to positive outcomes, such as the development of new collaborations, and information sharing.

A stronger interaction between CBIs and governments, in particular at the local scale, may pave the way for a new model of governance that is centred around the role of communities and which acknowledges the important intermediation which community-based organization can offer. Some CBIs can indeed play – and in some cases already play – a crucial role, acting as bridges between the public and the private sphere and between scales of governance. More cooperation between CBIs and public institutions can also have short-term effects like, for example, the possibility of using CBIs for communication and awareness raising on sustainability issues – CBIs can provide the right language while institutions can provide the right visibility – as well as for the design of more targeted, appropriated policies within the main domains in which grassroots initiatives are active in.

The intensity of the dialogue between CBIs and public institution varies considerably across the European Union. In the case of waste management in Romania (Chapter 11), for example, CBIs operate in the framework of a substantial lack of awareness of the role of CBIs, and of sustainability more generally, in both public institutions and local communities. Collaborations between institutions and CBIs could strongly enhance the actions of both, facilitating a societal transition.

Conversely, the case study on the energy sector in Finland (Chapter 10) highlighted how a positive relationship between CBIs and local municipalities has helped CBIs remain independent but with relevant responsibilities in the provision of alternative and more sustainable heating schemes. For instance, municipalities have made long lasting contracts with CBIs regarding heat provision services for the municipality and its inhabitants.

12.3.7 Remove barriers to public funding

One of the strongest concerns of (most) CBIs is related to their access to public funding and, connected to this, their financial sustainability. The situation is indeed highly varied, both with respect to funding opportunities available, and in the propensity of CBIs towards this source of revenue. However, there are many different ways in which public authorities can directly or indirectly support CBIs in this crucial matter, besides standard public grants: offering financial support or tax relief (for example, in specific fields such as renewable energy), or involving CBIs in activities that can be remunerated, are only some of the possible actions.

A great help could come from the simplification and clarification of the public funding landscape, connected to the issue of transparency and information discussed above. Similarly, more flexibility in the application of some regulations on funding (for example, State Aid and a “de minimis” regime, for what concerns EU funding opportunities specifically) might help CBIs

that make use of these mechanisms and decrease the disadvantages that initiatives have anyway with respect to larger, more experienced organizations.

On the other hand, CBIs need to increase their resilience by not relying too extensively and too exclusively on public funding. According to our research, financial sustainability requires the diversification of funding sources: the ability to access external funding, on the one hand (government incentives, grants, funds, donations, loans - ordinary or with preferential terms, etc.), and, on the other hand, to generate (internal) income. Public authorities may offer relevant support to enable innovation and help CBIs break out of the "dependency cycle" with public funding, when this is the case. This could, for example, link 'seedcorn' funding for starter projects to business development ideas that could help the development of a more localised economy.

The case study focused on CBIs operating in the energy sector in Finland (Chapter 10) offers an example of the relevant role that the availability of public funding plays for the emergence and persistence of CBIs, in particular in a money-intensive sector such as energy.

Moreover, funding, and its relevance for CBIs, is the main focus in the case study in Scotland presented in Chapter 9. Scotland offers one of the most favourable environments in terms of quantity and variety of public funding; however, the analysis also highlights the ways in which public funding offers both opportunities and threats to CBIs. This case shows that while public funding has enabled much community-led activity to take place, it has also created tensions around the autonomy and independence of grassroots initiatives.

12.3.8 Enhance CBI's access to assets

Together with funding, the second crucial concern that is common to CBIs all over Europe is related to their access to assets, in particular (but not exclusively) in terms of indoor or outdoor space. According to our research, almost a quarter of the CBIs which are part of our sample do not rely on any permanent office space, which means that their members work and/or meet at home or in a "public space loaned/free use" in order to run the initiative and its activities. For the remaining CBIs, the most common form of occupation is renting (47.5%), which may be unsustainable in the medium term. Only 5.0% of initiatives own the indoor spaces in which they operate, and only a quarter can rely on spaces given to them rent-free. The qualitative research undertaken within TESS, on the other hand, notes the fertility of material and permanent spaces (social centers, urban gardens and spaces where human face-to-face interaction takes place at higher intensities than elsewhere) for the emergence and expansion of sustainability initiatives, as well as for social innovation.

Moreover, problems that CBIs experience in their access to assets – and particularly space – are magnified by the ambiguity that often characterizes policies for the allocation of public spaces for social purposes.

A similar concern relates to vital assets, such as for CBIs that must invest in building infrastructures, heavy machinery, etc., for their activities, in particular in the fields of energy and waste. In these cases, the facilitation of planning permission processes and guidelines emerged as a potential way of dealing with this issue.

The comparative analysis between Barcelona and Rome presented in Chapter 0 focused specifically on the allocation of vacant public properties for social purposes. Promoting the temporary use of vacant spaces for different groups and purposes is a very relevant and 'low-cost' strategy that public institutions can embrace to support CBIs. However, it is important – and quite rare in practice – that this allocation follows clear and transparent rules.

Another example of the problems that might affect CBIs in their access to space is offered in Chapter 8 where an analysis of community empowerment and local democracy in Scotland is presented. The lack of availability and high price of land is a major issue for CBIs, and has had a negative impact on their ability to increase their impact and long-term sustainability.

12.3.9 Ensure information and knowledge for and around CBIs

Information and knowledge for and around CBIs is crucial, at different scales. As already mentioned in discussing other policy recommendations, CBIs might take advantage of getting trained or improving their knowledge on specific policy-related aspects, such as the availability of funds and the ways to apply for these funds, the different legal forms available for CBIs and the procedures to acquire these or specific regulations and laws (e.g., hygiene laws for CBIs reusing food waste from supermarkets). Furthermore, training between CBIs could represent an excellent way to help young initiatives to start up, and more generally to support the replication and diffusion of CBIs.

At the same time, and most importantly, public institutions can learn from CBIs; for example, they need to know better what kinds of CBIs exist, and what a CBI is which, in many countries, is often confused with a typical non-profit organization. A greater understanding of the universe and peculiarities of CBIs and their activities and impacts may pave the way for more positive relationships between grassroots initiatives and public institutions.

Moreover, public policies frequently tend to adopt a sectoral connotation, while they need to consider multiple aspects (environmental, social, etc.) and adopt a holistic approach towards sustainability in order to fully appreciate the value-added of CBIs with respect to other types of organizations or social practices. Such a holistic approach would favour CBIs insofar as they are very often active and high performing across different dimensions of public intervention.

Finally, and more generally, information and knowledge for, about and from CBIs, their activities and their potentialities, directed towards public institutions – including, for example, the direct participation of public officers or policy makers in any of the CBIs' activities or fora – may play a crucial role in favouring a societal transition. CBIs, indeed, embody sustainability principles and, through their ambitions and daily activities, show how a societal transition may

actually work in practice, as well as being able to contribute with their specific skills, knowledge and networks.

The case study on legal organizational forms for CBIs in Berlin (Chapter 7) shows how public institutions could benefit from training and information about CBIs, both in terms of the different legal forms that CBIs may adopt, as well as on their informal organizational structures. Informed local administrators can help CBIs to select an appropriate legal form, while educating local administrators on the importance of allowing CBIs to retain their unique practices may help local administrators to understand them better.

According to the case study on waste policy in Romania (Chapter 11), mentalities are the most relevant barriers to a sustainability transition. People are sceptical about the success of actions to protect the environment. Educating communities to environmental sustainability – both about the role that CBIs can play in this, and through collaborations with CBIs in raising awareness among citizens – may be a first crucial step towards a more sustainable future.

12.3.10 Invert the mindset

The final, crucial and most challenging policy recommendation is related to the need for public institutions to invert their mindset about the role of CBIs.

The concept of subsidiarity, one of the founding principles of the European Union affirmed in particularly in the Maastricht Treaty (1992), is of particular relevance here and should be applied as the basic frame for interpreting the role of CBIs. A collective effort is needed, from the side of public institutions, to reflect on and recognize the contribution that CBIs can offer within the current multi-level governance system, and to reconceptualise their role. This reflection has to be conducted at the European level but it can also be stimulated by actions or discussions undertaken at the local or country level.

If, on the one hand, community based-initiatives all over Europe are becoming accustomed to taking action in bringing about local change and demanding support to enable this, on the other hand, public institutions are still very cautious towards these initiatives. Even when public institutions are supportive of CBIs, their attitude is that of “conceding” something, “allowing” CBIs to ask for control over assets, etc. On the contrary, the rights and entitlements of CBIs should be more explicitly recognized and appreciated.

If CBIs are to become the drivers of a transition towards more sustainable European societies, public institutions should learn to see themselves as empowered by local communities rather than the opposite, acknowledging the innovative and disruptive potential of citizens-led initiatives in a period in which governments at different scales struggle to legitimize their role and intervene directly.

CBIs should therefore not be confined to top down encouragement, or asked to fill gaps in public service provision, but they should be seen as test-beds of radical innovation and even resistance against the current economic, political and social regime. Consequently, the

autonomy of CBIs, as well as their alterity, should be guaranteed together with their ability to influence the wider socio-political sphere. This is crucial in order to avoid an interpretation of CBIs as mere substitutes in taking charge of collective responsibilities and societal challenges which public institutions are no longer able to address, while safeguarding their ambition to address these challenges differently.

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