



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

European  
Research Area

Social sciences  
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# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



## LIVEWHAT

### Living with Hard Times

How Citizens React to Economic Crises and  
Their Social and Political Consequences

**Policy implications of LIVEWHAT, an EU-funded research project examining citizens' resilience in times of crisis across nine countries.**

**Ongoing project**

**November 2016**

## INTRODUCTION

This policy brief draws on cross-country research on alternative action organizations (AAOs) and their impact upon vulnerable groups and communities. AAOs fall within the spectrum of the emerging social and solidarity economy (SSE). AAOs are all around us. They refer to varying forms of co-operative, associative and solidarity relations. They include, for example, cooperatives, mutual associations, NGOs, self-help groups, barter networks, food banks, free medical services, soup kitchens, new cooperatives, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprise and fair trade

organizations and networks. While the recent economic crisis, growing inequality and social exclusion of vulnerable groups have prompted an intense interest among scholars, practitioners, activists and policy-makers on the meaning and trajectory of the SSE as a distinctive model of economic growth, we know far less about what European AAOs are, how their aims and activities unfold, and how they have been navigating in times of crisis.

To fill this void, LIVEWHAT researchers gathered data on AAOs in nine European countries, namely, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,

and the UK. Methodologically, the researchers relied on: (i) mapping and analysis of AAOs through online media sources (a random sample of 4.297 AAOs, approximately 500 in each country was selected and studied); (ii) conduction of an online survey based on a random sample of 500 AAOs; and (iii) qualitative personal interviews with participants and initiators of AAOs in each country.

The full findings of the research are available on the project website at: [www.livewhat.unige.ch](http://www.livewhat.unige.ch)

*The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.*

## KEY FINDINGS

### About AAOs

AAOs are characterized by diverse organizational forms, domains of activities, and approaches within and across countries. Figure 1 depicts the main types of AAO in each country studied. Two clear patterns and two individual cases can be identified. The first *South European* pattern, representing Greece, Italy, France and Spain, encompasses the highest frequencies of informal and protest groups (from 44-47%), followed by lower frequencies of NGOs (3-27%) and social economy groups (6.5-31%), and church and charity organizations (0.2-14%).

The second *non-South European* pattern, involving Sweden, Poland and Germany, portrays the highest frequencies of NGOs (69-53.5%), followed by church and charities in Poland and Sweden (22% in both) but only 4.7% in Germany. The two countries (also non-South EU) that do not follow the above patterns of prevalent organizational types are Switzerland and the UK. The highest

frequency of Social Economy (33.7%) AAOs are seen in Switzerland, followed by NGOs (30.1%), the informal/protest groups and Unions and Associations (13.1% in both). By contrast, Charities and Church holds highest frequency in the UK (49.5%), followed by social economy (30.7%) and very low frequencies on the remaining types of AAOs

In terms of AAOs' emergence, Figure 2, depicting the ratio of the AAOs' starting year at the aggregate level, shows that generally AAOs make their appearance as far back as the early 1900s, with noticeable presence immediately after WWII, and since the mid-60s. Increasing waves appear in the 70s escalating progressively and steadily after the mid-80s, but especially since the late nineties, mounting the highest peak during the recent crisis period. Thus, the 2008 economic crisis appears to have triggered the creation of new AAOs, as the founding ratio peaks from 2008 to 2013 (more than 5% every year), with subsequent decreases over 2014-15.

The overall growth in the nine countries studied seems to react in quite sensitive ways to the developments of the period and the recent economic downturn affecting EU countries. The rather smooth, escalating, composite peak, however, changes when we disaggregate at the country level, as shown in Figure 3. At a first glance, two clear patterns can be identified. One pattern is that of countries highly affected by the crisis, i.e. Spain and Greece, but also Italy and France, at the threshold of the crisis, and Poland in which the starting-year ratio peaks during the crisis years.

More specifically, the creation of almost half or more than half of the AAOs in Spain (50.4%), Greece (56.2%), France (49%), Italy (44.8%), and Poland (45.9%) occurred from 2008 to 2015. By contrast, the countries which were not as affected by the crisis,

witnessed the formation of fewer AAOs during 2008-15, i.e. Sweden (33.6%), Switzerland (24.6%), Germany (22.4%) and the UK (17.8%). Compared therefore to the former, AAOs in the latter countries are relatively older and more institutionalized, as most of them were founded in the 80s and 90s – with a noticeable peak in Switzerland in the late nineties.

### Activities

Because our European societies are constantly changing, AAOs' activities have been found to be varied. Figure 4 illustrates ten main types of alternative/solidarity activities at the aggregate level, documenting Basic/Urgent Needs as the most prominent in frequency main activity (52.7%), followed by Culture (46%) and Economy (42.6%) related activities. Basic/Urgent needs related activities include the provision of food, shelter, medical services, clothing, free legal advice, emergency support to groups in need (e.g. women, children, refugees), and anti- eviction initiatives. Even more revealing, however, is the cross-national comparison of the type of activities offered to address Basic/Urgent Needs. More importantly, the cross-national analysis in Table 1 sheds light on important similarities and differences among the nine countries concerning their specific actions within the main activity of Basic/Urgent Needs.

When it comes to shelter and housing-related actions, the UK, Switzerland, Sweden, Greece and Germany hold the highest frequencies (17-11.2%), while France, Poland, Spain and Italy show the lowest (5.4 -2.6%). Mental health services are highest in Poland (15.7%), the UK (13.6%), Greece (10.6%) and Sweden (8.3%), but lower in the other countries. Social Support/Help lines are most prominent in Sweden (62.3%) and the UK (44.4%), moderately so in Poland, Greece

and Switzerland (20.5, 19.8 and 17.5%) and least frequent in the remaining four countries. Free legal advice and consulting service actions are most prevalent in Poland (30.3%), less so in Sweden (16.9%), the UK (12.2%) and Greece (10.2%), and lowest elsewhere. In addition, Sweden and Poland have the highest frequencies in educational activities (29.5 and 25.3%). It is noteworthy that Germany alone has the highest frequency in Social Grocery actions (42.8%), Spain leads in anti- eviction actions (18.3%) while Sweden leads in emergency support to women (6.7%); comparatively, all other countries, feature very low frequencies in the respective actions.

Furthermore, LIVEWHAT data bring to surface five specific actions, in all of which Greece holds the highest frequency compared (and with considerable distance) to the other countries: i.e. clothing/items provision, health/social (free) medicine, social community kitchens, emergency refugee/migrant support and actions against direct and indirect taxation (24.4%, 21.6%, 11.2%, 18.2% and 5.2% respectively). These reflect the intensity of the impacts of the economic crisis (see also below, the crisis factor), the related dramatic decline in the standards of living for a considerable part of the Greek population, as well as impacts of the 2015 refugee crisis in Greece.

### Aims

LIVEWHAT data shows that different AAOs share features that distinguish them from the public economy and from the conventional for-profit economy. Yet, they all aim to pursue combined social and economic objectives and they share specific operating principles based on empowerment, solidarity, change, self-determination, tolerance, and democratic ownership. Table 2 illustrates similarities and differences within each type of AAO aims, across the nine countries. One

interesting finding is that Swedish AAOs score the top frequency in eight types of aims, Swiss, French and Spanish on three, two and two types of aims respectively, while Greek and Polish AAOs hold top frequency only in one type of aim: Greek ones on reducing the impacts of the economic crisis and Polish ones on promoting democratic practices.

More specifically, aiming to reduce the impacts of the economic crisis is most prominent in Greece (28.4%) and Germany (25.1%), less so in Spain (17.2%) and Switzerland (15.0%) and lowest in the other countries (4.0 in Italy to 0.4% in the UK). Reducing poverty and exclusion are most frequent AAO goals in Sweden (47.2%), Germany (41.4%) and Poland (41.2%), considerably frequent in Switzerland (31.2%), the UK (29.2%) and Spain (23.1%) and least frequent in the rest of the countries. Combating discrimination/promoting equality of participation is highest in Sweden (38.5%), the UK (36.0%) and Poland (33.1%), less frequent in Switzerland (27.9%) and Greece (24.8%) and lowest in France (8.2%) and Italy (5.6%).

Increasing tolerance/mutual understanding is most prominent aim in Sweden (35.8%) and Switzerland (24.9%), considerably lower in Poland, the UK, Greece, France and Germany (from 18.7 to 9.8%) and lowest in Spain (3.3%) and Italy (2.2%). Promoting alternative economic practices is the aim most prominent in France (64.6%), Italy (60.4%) and Switzerland (54.7%) followed with lower frequencies in Spain (38.6%) and lowest in the rest. Promoting and achieving social change at the collective/societal level reaches highest frequencies in Spain (48.4%) and Sweden (47.3%), lower in Poland (39.6%), Switzerland (31.5%), Greece (30.4%), the UK (27.8%), and France (27%) and lowest in the other countries. The promotion and achievement of positive/individual change is

an AAO goal of highest frequency in Sweden (64.4%), the UK (48.0%) and Switzerland (42.0) and lower in the other countries. The goal of sustainable development is highest in France (50.4%), lower in Switzerland (34.2%) and Italy (33.4%) and lowest in the remaining countries. The aim of promoting health, education and welfare is highest in Sweden (47.0%), the UK (45%), Poland (36.3%) and Greece (29.6%) and lower in the other countries.

Promoting alternative non-economic practices, lifestyles and values is highest in Switzerland (32.4%), lower in Greece (22.2%) and lowest in the other countries. Promoting dignity is most prominent in Sweden (18.1%) and Greece (9.8%), but lower in the rest of the countries. Promoting individual rights and responsibility is most frequent in Sweden (20.6%) and Poland (18.7%), but lower in the other countries. Promoting self-determination, self-initiative, self-representation and self-empowerment reaches top frequencies in Sweden (40.5%), Switzerland (36.6%) and Poland (34.3%). This is lower in the remaining countries, and lowest in Italy (4.2%). The aim of promoting democratic practices, defending rights, and improving public space is most frequent in Poland (39.2%), Spain (30.5%) and Switzerland (29.4%), lower in Greece (20.6%) and Sweden (21%) and lowest in the others, reaching the least frequency in Germany (5.6%).

Promoting collective identities and community responsibility/empowerment is highest in Switzerland (39%), Italy (30.4%), and Sweden (28.7%), lower in the UK (23.6%), Greece (25%) and Poland (21.7%) and lowest in the remaining countries. The aim of promoting self-managed collectivity is met most often in Switzerland (24.9%), less so in Italy (17.4%), Greece (11%) and France (10.6%) and least so in the other countries –

lowest in the UK (1.6%). Finally, promoting social movement actions and collective identities is of top frequency in Spain (29.6%), of lower frequency in Italy (16.8%), Switzerland (15%) and Greece (14%) and lowest in the rest of the countries – least so in Germany (2.2%).

In terms of prevalent solidarity approaches used in the delivery of aims and the generation of goods and services for AAOs participants and beneficiaries, Figure 5 shows that the most prominent type is the *mutual help approach*, adopted by almost half of the AAOs (49.2%). Second in frequency are distribution of goods AAOs, whose mission is the distribution of goods and services to people in need. This solidarity from above approach, is mostly visible in charities and other church related institutions. Third most frequent is an altruistic approach, where AAOs offer help and support to others. The lowest in frequency solidarity approach is support/assistance between groups, chosen by almost one fifth of the AAOs.

### Resource sources

While AAOs can draw resources from diverse sources, they largely depend on resources provided by their initiators and/or members. Figure 6 provides a selected set of available resource-proxies aiming to shed light on the resources which are important to AAOs at the aggregate level. The data show that donations appear to be the most prevalent resource-proxy, as reflected by the calls to donors in one third of AAO websites (33%). The importance of financial resource management is also similarly reflected in the next most prominent proxy, the existence of a treasurer/responsible for finance or accounting, found in one fourth of AAOs (25.3%). It is also mirrored in the material on finances and financial transparency that are available in the AAO websites (16.4%), such

as financial reports, financial statements and annual budgets. Human/staff resources follow in importance as AAO resources, as about one fifth of AAOs have paid-staff (18.6%) while a similar portion 16% have calls on recruiting personnel through their websites.

Building on the findings of the online survey conducted in the nine countries, Table 3 presents AAOs' most important resource constraints to achieve their goals. Across all countries, the most prevalent constraints include lack of funding (57.2%), lack of cooperation with/support from central (47.7%), regional (42.9%) and local government or its agencies (44.4%). Moreover, across all countries important constraints are associated with lack of human resources, including lack of volunteers (40.5%) and active members (42.8%).

### Supporters and partners

A closer examination of the types of AAO partners indicates that AAOs can draw on a diverse array of partners depending on the nature and context of operation. Figure 7 shows that the most frequent AAO partners are: municipal/local, regional and state authorities and organizations (21.6%) informal and protest groups (18.3%) and private companies and enterprises (17.2%). NGOs (16.7%), unions/associations (16.4%) and charities (13.5%) follow with lower frequencies. Universities/cultural clubs (9.9%), social economy enterprises (8.1%), EU agencies (3.8%) and other transnational partners (2.9%) are of lowest in frequency as AAOs partners.

Looking cross-nationally within each type of partner in Table 4, informal and protest groups are more prevalent as AAO partners in Spain (35.7%), Switzerland (32.1%), Greece (29.6) and France (25.6%), but lowest the UK (3.0%). Social economy enterprises partners are most frequent in Spain (24.0%), and



Switzerland (21.9%), and lowest in Sweden (1.2%). NGO partners are more prominent in Poland (28.1%), Switzerland (26.1%) and Greece (23.6%), but least so in Germany (8.6%) the UK (7.4%). Charities and Churches are most frequent partners in British (25.4%) and Polish AAOs (20.5%). Union partners of highest frequencies are found in Switzerland (35.4%), France (25.4%) and Spain (21.8%). Municipal/regional/central state agencies are more often partners of Polish (40.6%), Swiss (36.9%) and Greek AAOs (27.6%). University and cultural club partners are more prevalent as partners in Swiss (17.4%) and Greek AAOs (16.4%). Last but not least, companies constitute an engaging partner type which shows higher frequencies across Polish (36.3%), Swedish (23.2%), Swiss (21.9%), Greek (21%) and British AAOs (18.4%).

### Beneficiaries and participants

Figure 8 below depicts 15 different types of beneficiaries/participants at the aggregate level. The most outstanding beneficiary group for almost half of the AAOs (40.8%), is the *general public and every interested person*, an unexpected finding that reflects unmet needs for a wider beneficiary group during hard economic times. The next three most prominent groups, mentioned by about one fourth of all AAOs, are *children, youth and students* (26.9%), the *poor or marginalized people and communities*, including the homeless and the imprisoned (26.3%), and local communities (24.4%). This finding is also noteworthy, reflecting again the unmet needs of young people, a more vulnerable segment of the population. Lower in frequency, are citizen-consumers/small enterprises (18.9%), the disabled/health vulnerable (15.2%), families (14.2%) and the uninsured/unemployed or precarious workers (13.7%) and immigrants/refugees (12.2%). New labor conditions and the refugee crisis

are two issues that concern European AAOs; thus, approximately 15% have as beneficiaries the precarious, the uninsured workers or the unemployed people, and the refugees and migrants. The elderly/pensioners (8.6%) and women (8.2%) and minorities/hate crime victims (5.1%) are AAO beneficiaries at a much lower frequency.

### The crisis factor

Drawing on the findings of the online survey, Table 5 presents AAOs' increased demand for specific issues since 2010, i.e. in the context of the recent economic crisis. Across all countries, the highest prevalence of issues with increased demand concern specifically networking and helping other groups/organizations/associations (69.9%); providing non-material support (e.g. interpersonal, emotional etc.) (53.0%); exchanging services and products (43.9%); providing legal aid/legal services (42.5%); providing free educational services and material (e.g. classes, books, etc.) (42.4%) and concerning energy/waste /environment/animal rights issues (40.4%). The highest prevalence of increased demand for food programs (e.g. free meals food banks) (58.6%) and free material support (e.g. clothes, shoes etc.) (59.3%), as well as for free health care (e.g. medical exams, medicines, vaccines) (55.2%), and debt counseling (e.g. mortgage problems etc.) (39.7%) is reported in Greece and for homeless services in Sweden (43.1%) and Greece (41.4%).

More British AAOs compared to AAOs in other countries report an increased demand for housing problems advice (52.4%), emergency financial support (47.6%), networking and helping other AAOs (85.0%) as well as providing non-material support (75.0%). The highest prevalence of increased demand for free educational services (64.4%)

and legal aid/legal services (74.5%) is reported in Poland, whereas general assistance and support in everyday activities (e.g. help with shopping etc.) is most prevalent in Germany (41.5%). The highest prevalence of increased demand for exchanging services and products (67.3%), consumer/producer issues (62.7%) and energy/waste/environment/animal rights issues is reported in Italy (62.7%).

The cross-sectional analysis indicates that in British AAOs the majority of actions with increased demand since 2010 include networking and helping other groups/organizations/associations (85.0%), employment advice/training programs (76.2%) and non-material support (75.0%). More than half of activities with increased demand involve free material support (55.0%), exchange of services and products (52.6%), food programs (52.4%) and housing problems advice (52.4%). In French AAOs, more than half of actions with increased demand since 2010 include networking and helping other groups/organizations/associations (61.3%), energy/waste/environment/animal rights issues (61.3%) and consumer/producer issues (61.3%). In Germany, 65% of actions with increased demand include networking and helping other organizations, and more than half involve food programs (54.8%) and free material support (53.7%). Moreover, an increased demand is detected for non-material support (48.8%), exchange of services and products (45.2%), housing problems advice (43.9%) and general assistance and support in everyday activities (e.g. helping with shopping etc.) (41.5%).

In Greek AAOs, the highest prevalence of actions with increased demand involve legal aid/legal services (72.4%), networking and helping other organizations (67.2%), non-material support (64.5%), free educational

services (59.7%), free material support (59.3%), food programs (58.6%), free health care (55.2%) exchange services and products (52.6%). Additionally, increased demand is detected for employment advice/training programs (43.3%), emergency financial support (43.1%), homeless services (41.4%), energy/waste/environment/animal rights issues (41.4%) and housing problems advice (40.7%). In Italian AAOs, the majority of actions with increased demand are detected for networking and helping other organizations (81.1%), exchange of services and products (67.3%), energy/waste/environment/animal rights issues (62.7%) and consumer/producer issues (62.7%).

In Polish AAOs, the highest prevalence of actions with increased demand is reported for legal aid/legal advices (74.5%) and free educational services and material (64.4%). Moreover, a high prevalence of actions with increased demand is reported for networking and helping other organizations (63.0%), employment advice and training programs (57.4%), non-material support (52.2%), exchange of services and products (51.1%), free material support (44.4%) and energy/waste/ environment/ animal rights issues (44.4%). The majority of actions with increased demand in Spanish AAOs are reported for networking and helping other organizations (75.6%), non-material support (69.0%), and exchange of services and products (61.0%). High percentages are also detected for free educational services (48.8%), employment advice/training programs (47.6%), consumer product issues (47.5%), legal aid/legal services (46.3%), and free material support (40.5%).

In agreement with the findings in other countries, the highest prevalence of action with increased demand in Swedish AAOs is reported for networking and helping other

organizations (76.9%). Also, the majority of actions with increased demand involves non-material support (75%), free educational services (59.7%) and legal aid/legal services (56.9%). Moreover, high percentages are reported for employment advice/training programs (47.6%), free material support (46.2%) and homeless services (43.1%). For Swiss AAOs, like in AAOs in other countries, the highest prevalence of action with increased demand is detected for networking and helping other organizations (63.3%), 42.4% involve non-material support and 33.3% exchange of services and products as well as employment advice/training programs.

and from the conventional for-profit economy. Driven primarily by social benefit motives as opposed to capital accumulation, these organizations are largely ‘people-centred.’ They aim to pursue combined social and economic objectives and share specific operating principles based on participation, solidarity, mutual help, voluntary involvement and collective ownership.

Yet, if AAOs are not simply to be a response to crisis, but effective means to expand and diversify according to each society’s needs and dynamics, then policy-makers must put in place ideas, strategies and ways to learn and adapt to complex and changing circumstances, and not least to external pressures and shocks. This also involves the ability to produce new goods, innovative services and processes that meet social needs or create new social relationships and collaborations. Seen in this way, the recent growth of AAOs presents the opportunity to:

1) Rethink the way of life in a society that suffers from exclusion, inequality, and poverty, and; 2) Plan more comprehensive and democratic economic and social policies which comprise production inclusion, social equality, poverty eradication, and reduction of wealth concentration. AAOs can contribute towards designing a new growth model as they represent another business format based on value like long-term benefit, and the primacy of people over capital. Therefore, this period of crisis in which we find ourselves is not only a threat, but also an opportunity to lay the basis of a better economic model.

#### ► AAOs as a vehicle for empowerment

Empowerment is an important factor that allows individuals and communities to have a voice and be represented. Empowerment can

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

### ► AAOs as a buffer against the crisis

LIVEWHAT data show that the effects of the recent economic crisis - unemployment, exclusion, inequality, poverty – have obliged European citizens to rethink the way organized communities meet social needs. The needs of large groups in society in crisis-affected as well as in countries less affected by the crisis are neither met effectively by conventional markets nor by the state. One product of this rethinking has been the emergence of AAOs – formal and informal groups with primarily social objectives – as part of a growing SSE. In all nine countries studied by LIVEWHAT, AAOs were found to complement other channels of providing goods and services. This includes the reintegration of vulnerable groups into working lives and the extension of social welfare and protection by providing goods and services to address emerging urgent needs.

What the data show is that AAOs in all nine countries studied share common features that distinguish them from the public economy



be built through a variety of processes and mechanisms. LIVEWHAT data show that participation and membership in AAOs contribute to an empowerment process, individually and collectively. Participants and beneficiaries gain empowerment through their active involvement in the participatory decision-making process within the organization and outside the organizations when they bargain with external stakeholders.

At the collective level, AAOs also contribute to the empowerment process of individuals and communities by demonstrating that all individuals can become active and productive economic and social actors. Hence while already prominent in Western and Northern Europe, AAOs have considerably grown in Southern European countries over the past years to become a significant economic and social factor across Europe. Nevertheless, more efforts are required to build and establish a common understanding about the necessity of an SSE-oriented policy-making especially at local, regional, national and EU levels.

### ► The need for enabling policy environments

LIVEWHAT data show that disabling environments associated with AAO funding, weak initial conditions, assets and competencies, have rendered some AAOs (especially in crisis-affected countries) not only inherently fragile but also amenable to those populations at the bottom of the ladder in terms of endowments and capabilities. At the same time, limited political will and capacities of state institutions, including local governments, to craft and implement enabling policies, and weak governance arrangements and spaces for the co-construction of policy have impacted on the possibilities of designing, implementing collaborations to solve problems. Hence, in crafting synergies

and collaborations, the issue is how to ensure that the AAO actor's 'voice', or their seat at the table, actually translates into them becoming a player who can effectively influence decision-making processes.

Periods of crisis are accompanied by recovery plans and plans for reforming systems that contributed to the crisis. In this time of crisis recovery; therefore, the promotion of AAOs in decision-making structures and of SSE considerations within policy frameworks is a significant tool for achieving social inclusion and cohesion, from local to European levels.

More particularly, the growth of AAOs and development of the SSE often requires public policies to recognize the particularities and added value of the SSE in economic, social and societal terms (e.g. forms of governance, outreach of vulnerable groups). It requires that public policies for the AAOs are dynamic - constantly evolving in response to changing social conditions - as well as demand the strong and active participation of civil society in their planning, execution and monitoring. Bearing in mind this, the main concern at the outset should be that policies created to support the development of AAOs at the European, national and local levels must be oriented towards:

- recognizing AAOs as a social actor in public dialogue;
- developing technical assistance for AAOs (e.g. solidarity economic enterprises and networks of solidarity economy cooperation);
- facilitating AAOs' access to appropriate technologies, assistance etc.;
- raising awareness about the role and activities of the SSE sector;
- facilitating access to finance and making available funds to finance projects;

- providing capacity-building to AAO participants, education of trainers, educators and public administrators.

Also, to be more effective, public policies for AAOs must be conceived as a result of citizens' collective action ("co-production"). Crucially, creating overall 'enabling policy environments' raises some issues. For example, how to institutionalize AAOs in governmental structures; the centrality and interfaces of the AAO in other policies; and, how to establish permanent and effective mechanisms for AAO participation in policy management. This should be treated cautiously so to avoid antagonistic relations between AAO and state actors emerging. In this respect, meeting the main challenges for a policy and legal framework supportive of the AAOs requires:

- a major institutional role for the SSE;
- adequate legislation, regulations and norms;
- tools for impact assessments;
- better integration of policies among different government levels (sectoral and regional);
- a reinforced dialogue between civil society organizations and the political decision-makers.

### ► The importance of partnerships and networks

AAOs cannot be developed or sustained by isolated organizations and enterprises. Networking and partnerships are key factors in building a strong, recognized and visible SSE. More particularly, AAOs need to root themselves in community, mobilize various stakeholders and build strong alliances with social partners and public authorities. While this process requires a lot of effort on the part of AAO actors, for successful partnerships and networks to emerge, national and regional governments need to acknowledge AAOs'

crucial role in the provision of goods and service because of their capacity to mobilize resources from the community and within the marketplace to achieve public benefit. AAOs capacity to produce innovative solutions to complex problems should become the focus of territorial policy and of interventions aiming to support AAOs and local communities in creating strategic planning processes and collective projects.

Admittedly, developing strong partnerships and networks is not an overnight miracle; it requires a long-term vision and a strategic plan that allows different stakeholders to work together successfully. On their end, AAOs need to step up their efforts to network among themselves at the local, national and European levels. Through their federations and networks, they may enhance their representation and collaboration capacities.

On the part of policy-makers, efforts are required to determine what is required to create strong networks and partnerships with AAOs, adapted to their countries' specific realities and SSE potential. For instance, networks that practice *inclusiveness* are expected to be the most successful in developing new public policy and creating development tools for the emerging AAOs. Because they are better able to show the scope and the depth of the SSE in different country contexts, networks that can bring together a wide variety of AAOs and other stakeholders will, in the end, manage to initiate social dialogue with government and other social partners.

Further on, given the different national experiences, the emergence of new networks may often be the result of *flexibility* by existing AAO structures. Clearly, 'one size does not fit all' as different national policy and legal frameworks and governance structures are expected to impact on the

emergence, effectiveness, and sustainability of new networks. Building from the bottom up to take into account new realities and diverse approaches is characteristic of sustainable networks and partnerships.

Lastly, the strongest networks are those that are based on local and regional structures, that are rooted in communities and territorial realities. Such networks will benefit from the support of a wide range of partners and their contribution to socio-economic development and inclusive growth will be clearly demonstrated in the field. Put it differently, encouraging, promoting, and supporting networks and partnerships may play an enriching role in reinforcing peer learning among AAO actors and policy-makers – locally, regionally or nationally – and across Europe.

## THE PROJECT

### Objectives

LIVEWHAT is an EU-funded research project on policy responses and citizens' resilience in times of crisis. The project has four main objectives:

- a). to advance knowledge regarding the ways in which citizens respond to economic crises and their social and political consequences;
- b). to contribute to placing citizens' responses to economic crises and their negative consequences on the political agenda by raising awareness about the situation of groups particularly at risk in situations of economic crisis;
- c). to improve the problem-solving capacity of policy-makers and practitioners by providing policy recommendations and a catalogue of good practices;
- d). to help develop a more comprehensive and concerted problem-solving approach within Member States and the European Union by

promoting knowledge-transfer and policy-learning.

### Scientific approach and methodology

LIVEWHAT's theoretical approach allows for studying resilience along the analytical continuum between the individual level of single citizens who learn how to 'bounce back' and downplay the costs of crises, and the far-reaching forms of collective resilience aimed at entering the public domain so as to challenge inequities and foster common empowerment.

The project conceives of resilience as the capacity of European citizens to stand against economic hardship through an active process of contestation and empowerment. Going beyond previous studies that have studied the impact of economic crises on specific groups such as children, youth, and families treated as passive categories. LIVEWHAT puts citizens engaged in alternative forms of resilience at center stage. Alternative forms of resilience include the strengthening of social and family networks and community practices to foster solidarity in the face of crises, change of lifestyles toward more sustainable forms of consumption and production, developing new artistic expressions.

Although these transformations in citizen practices (from adapted to alternative) are decisive for citizens' resilience in times of austerity, they have not yet been thoroughly studied.

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ANNEX

Figure 1. AAO type per country

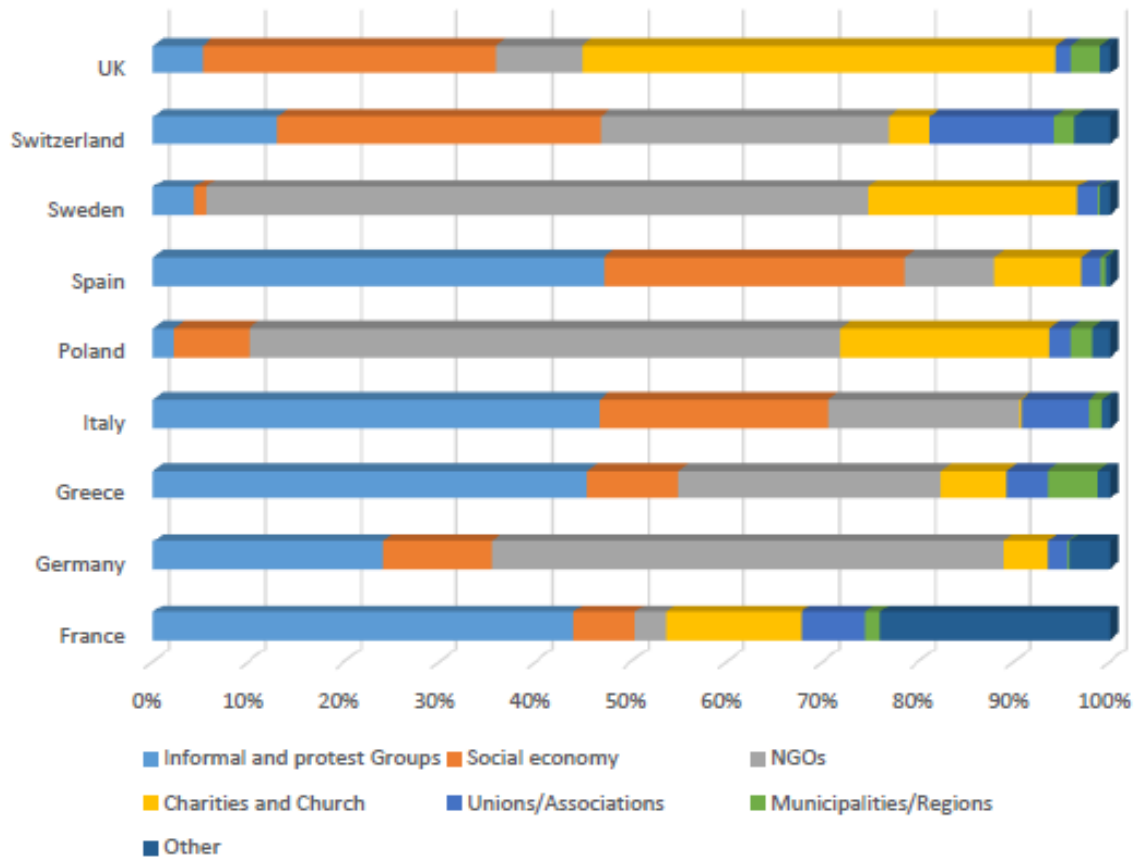


Figure 2. Starting year of AAO (ratio) and number of starting AAOs by year

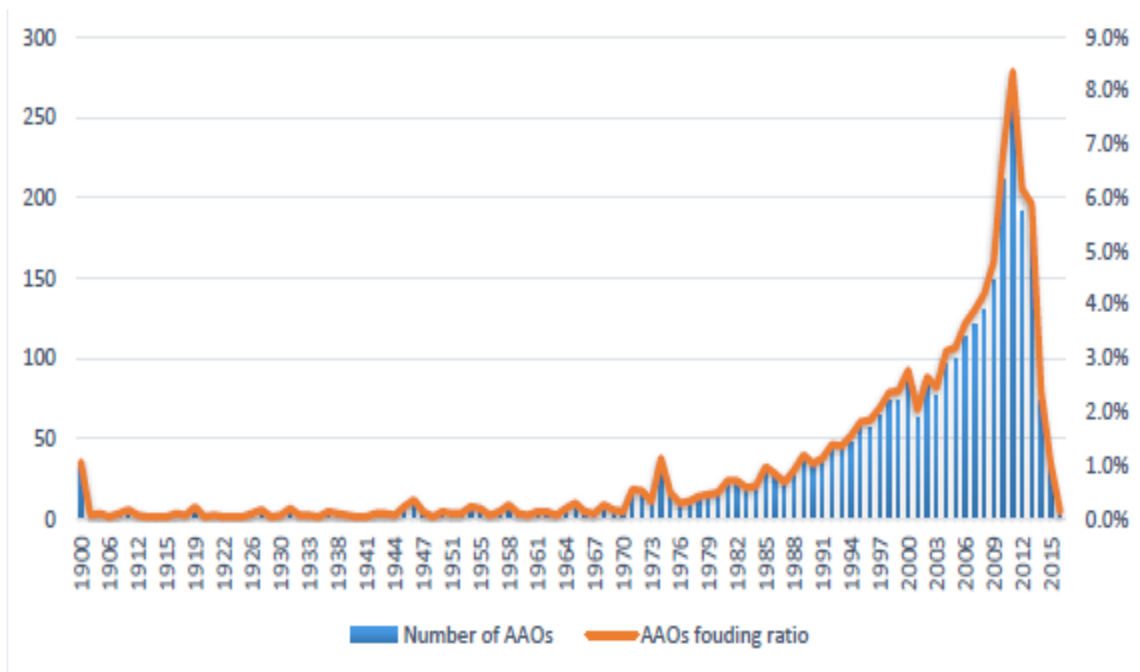


Figure 3. AAO founding ratio per country from 1965

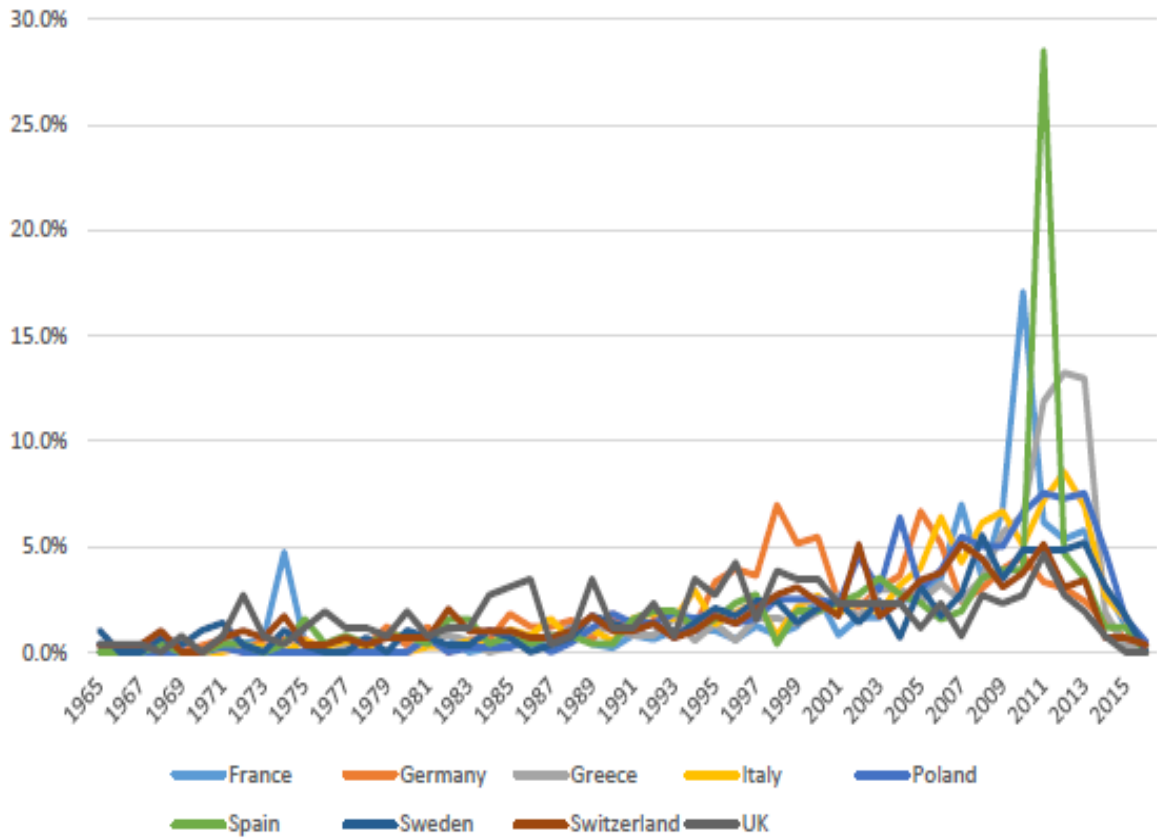
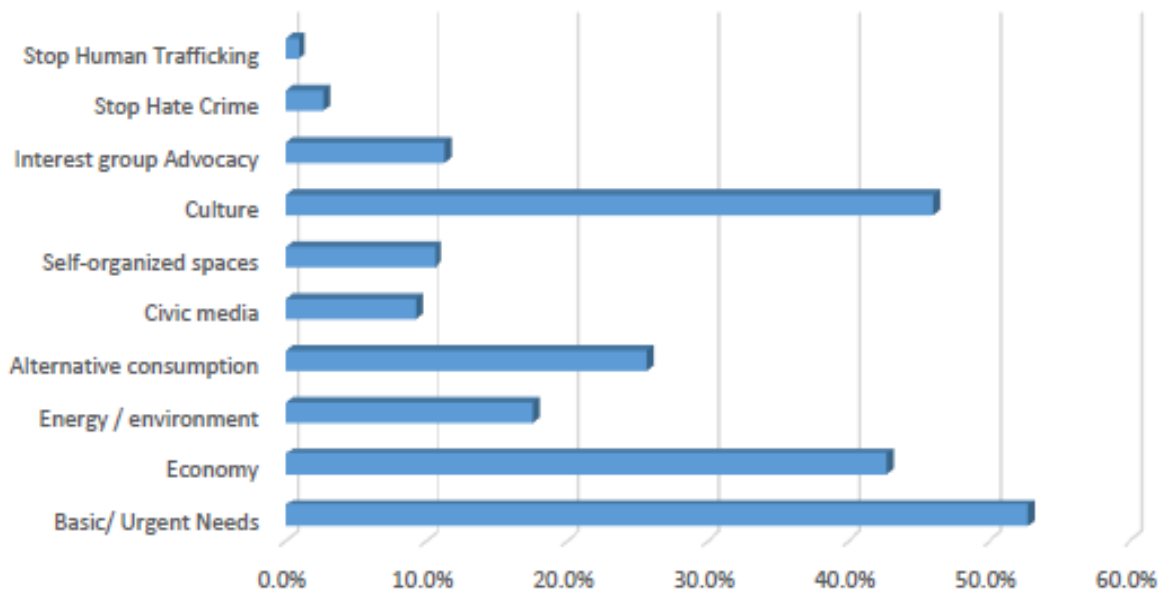


Figure 4. Alternative activities



**Table 1. Type of urgent-basic needs resilient activities organized by AAOs per country\***

Urgent Needs Activities	FR (%)	GER (%)	GR (%)	IT (%)	POL (%)	SP (%)	SE (%)	CH (%)	UK (%)
Shelter/Housing	2,6	11,2	12,8	4,6	5,2	5,4	15,3	15,6	17,0
Social/community Kitchens	0,0	4,0	11,2	1,4	5,4	3,7	6,3	1,5	2,2
Social Grocery	1,2	42,8	6,8	0,2	5,2	2,8	2,0	2,4	2,2
Health/Social Medicine	7,4	4,6	21,6	2,6	16,3	3,5	3,7	5,7	16,6
Mental Health	2,0	4,8	10,6	1,8	15,7	2,4	8,3	3,9	13,6
Social support/Help Line	9,0	7,6	19,8	9,4	20,5	10,9	62,3	17,1	44,4
Clothing/Items provision	0,6	4,4	24,4	0,6	5,8	2,4	6,9	0,9	2,0
Education	9,0	5,4	13,0	10,6	25,3	10,0	29,5	9,3	10,0
Anti-eviction	0,0	1,8	4,6	4,4	0,6	18,3	0,0	9,0	0,0
Anti-taxation, direct/indirect	0,0	0,0	5,2	0,2	0,0	0,9	0,0	0,0	0,0
Emergency refugee/immigrant Support	1,0	5,4	18,2	2,8	3,4	2,2	11,2	2,1	3,4
Emergency support to women and children	1,4	1,4	4,6	3,4	4,6	0,7	6,7	1,8	4,4
Free legal/consulting services	6,2	3,8	10,2	4,6	30,3	9,6	16,9	7,5	12,2
Volunteers Call	1,0	0,4	1,2	2,0	11,8	1,3	2,6	2,1	3,2
N	500	498	500	500	498	459	509	333	500

\* Note: Alternative activities are coded as dichotomous (yes/no variables) and therefore percentages do not sum to 100. Coding multiple categories was allowed since most of the AAOs engage in a variety of activities. Percentages are calculated based on the count of cases within each (country) category divided by the total number of AAOs of the country.

**Table 2. AAO aims per country\***

Aim of the AAO	FR (%)	GER (%)	GR (%)	IT (%)	POL (%)	SP (%)	SE (%)	CH (%)	UK (%)
To reduce the impacts of the economic crisis/austerity	3,6	25,1	28,4	4,0	1,8	17,2	0,4	15,0	0,4
To reduce poverty and exclusion	9,6	41,4	14,2	11,6	41,2	23,1	47,2	31,2	29,2
To combat discrimination/promote equality	8,2	11,0	24,8	5,6	33,1	17,6	38,5	27,9	36,0
To increase tolerance-mutual understanding	10,0	9,8	11,0	2,2	18,7	3,3	35,8	24,9	11,4
To promote alternative economic practices	64,6	24,3	15,8	60,4	16,7	38,6	8,4	54,7	14,8
To promote and achieve social change	27,0	11,0	30,4	16,8	39,6	48,4	47,3	31,5	27,8
To promote positive/individual change	20,0	15,3	21,8	5,8	37,3	10,7	64,4	42,0	48,0
To promote sustainable development	50,4	12,4	12,0	33,4	25,7	15,7	6,9	34,2	10,2

To promote health, education and welfare	20,8	7,4	29,6	18,2	36,3	9,2	47,0	23,1	45,0
To promote alternative noneconomic practices	12,6	11,2	22,2	16,6	14,9	15,0	9,6	32,4	11,8
To promote dignity	1,8	0,4	9,8	6,2	7,6	7,0	18,1	6,9	1,2
To promote individual rights and responsibility	8,4	2,4	6,6	4,2	18,7	5,7	20,6	12,6	7,8
To promote self-determination-self-empowerment*	14,6	6,0	9,6	4,2	34,3	24,0	40,5	36,6	14,4
To promote democratic practices	10,0	5,6	20,6	14,8	39,2	30,5	21,0	29,4	7,8
To promote collective identities - community empowerment	16,6	13,7	25,0	30,4	21,7	10,9	28,7	39,0	23,6
To promote self-managed collectivity	10,6	7,8	11,0	17,4	7,4	2,6	5,5	24,9	1,6
To promote social movement actions - collective identities	2,4	2,2	14,0	16,8	3,0	29,6	2,2	15,0	7,0
<b>N</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>500</b>

\* Note: Alternative activities are coded as dichotomous (yes/no variables) and therefore percentages do not sum to 100. Coding multiple categories was allowed since most of the AAOs engage in a variety of activities. Percentages are calculated based on the count of cases within each (country) category divided by the total number of AAOs of the country.

Figure 5. Solidarity approaches of AAOs

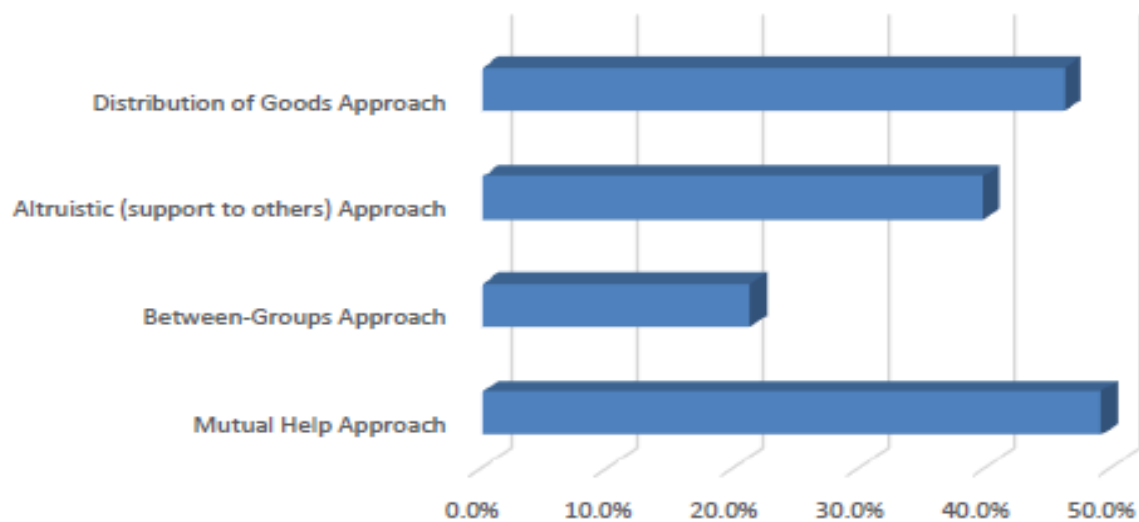




Figure 6. Resource indicators

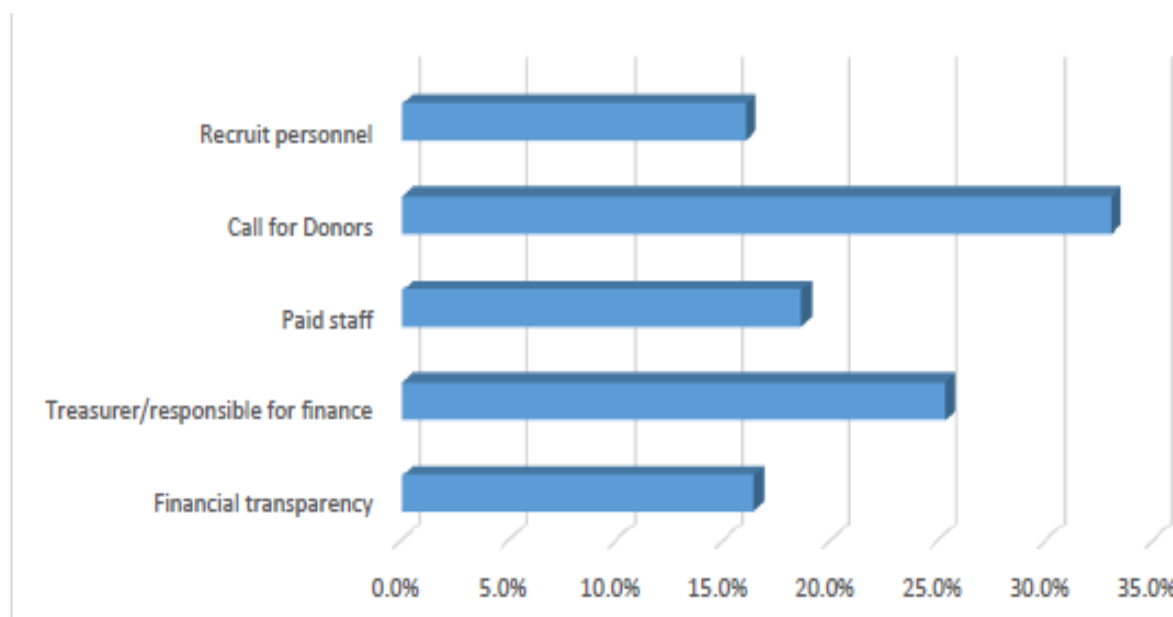


Table 3. Most important constraints to achieve AAO goals (mean %, important)

	UK		France		Germany		Greece		Italy	
	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important
Lack of funding	8.14	65.0%	6.77	48.3%	7.30	40.0%	9.01	71.2%	7.45	50.0%
Lack of individual donations	6.45	18.8%	6.34	27.7%	6.84	29.4%	8.17	59.3%	6.24	30.0%
Lack of material resources	6.90	41.2%	5.70	29.8%	6.32	28.9%	7.15	50.0%	5.62	38.8%
Lack of personnel with informational, technical, organizational and networking skills	5.71	35.0%	6.38	45.6%	6.70	50.0%	6.65	34.5%	5.47	29.2%
Lack of volunteers	5.52	31.6%	7.83	60.0%	6.95	47.4%	6.18	40.0%	7.72	61.4%
Lack of active members	6.10	18.8%	7.28	62.1%	7.02	55.8%	6.52	39.7%	5.69	34.0%
Lack of organizational leaders	4.43	11.1%	5.44	32.8%	6.32	42.9%	6.28	34.0%	4.31	23.4%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from local government or its agencies	6.55	50.0%	6.25	38.2%	6.81	48.6%	6.52	41.8%	7.38	50.0%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from regional government or its agencies	6.24	38.9%	7.30	39.1%	7.98	44.8%	7.30	44.0%	8.56	64.1%

Lack of cooperation with/ support from central government or its agencies	7.68	57.9%	7.72	44.2%	8.68	51.9%	7.86	52.9%	9.41	67.7%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from other non-state groups/organizations/associations	6.33	13.3%	5.83	21.6%	6.00	25.7%	6.09	25.0%	6.84	28.9%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from EU agencies	7.29	30.8%	7.90	43.6%	8.09	34.8%	7.70	40.9%	8.57	40.7%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from transnational organizations	7.57	27.3%	8.13	7.1%	7.39	5.0%	7.59	38.1%	8.84	31.8%
Getting funding from the main organization we belong to	8.81	36.4%	6.77	21.9%	7.30	23.1%	9.67	45.8%	7.30	30.0%

	Poland		Spain		Sweden		Switzerland		Total	
	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important	Mean	% important
Lack of funding	9.02	80.4%	6.43	48.8%	7.08	55.9%	7.29	56.3%	7.59	57.2%
Lack of individual donations	7.73	59.0%	5.70	31.6%	6.52	33.3%	6.82	34.0%	6.81	37.6%
Lack of material resources	5.65	31.9%	5.00	26.2%	4.38	22.5%	4.76	21.0%	5.60	31.3%
Lack of personnel with informational, technical, organizational and networking skills	6.78	51.1%	5.32	30.2%	5.43	43.1%	5.00	27.4%	5.92	38.5%
Lack of volunteers	5.84	38.3%	5.09	28.6%	5.70	37.9%	5.32	17.9%	6.29	40.5%
Lack of active members	7.65	57.8%	5.70	32.6%	6.75	49.2%	6.03	17.3%	6.56	42.8%
Lack of organizational leaders	6.18	49.0%	4.70	19.5%	4.63	29.0%	4.74	14.0%	5.26	29.5%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from local government or its agencies	6.86	55.3%	6.70	47.5%	7.16	49.2%	6.06	26.8%	6.69	44.4%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from regional government or its agencies	8.29	61.0%	6.98	40.0%	7.84	34.1%	6.12	26.3%	7.43	42.9%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from central government or its agencies	8.76	73.2%	7.11	34.4%	6.84	33.3%	7.21	28.3%	7.85	47.7%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from other non-state groups/organizations/associations	5.00	23.4%	6.14	22.2%	4.82	19.0%	5.38	14.8%	5.74	21.7%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from EU agencies	7.59	48.6%	7.60	24.0%	8.69	38.2%	9.57	23.8%	8.23	38.0%
Lack of cooperation with/ support from transnational organizations	7.88	33.3%	7.53	4.8%	8.13	20.6%	9.40	29.2%	8.15	23.3%
Getting funding from the main organization we belong to	9.61	31.3%	8.29	11.8%	6.28	20.0%	8.42	17.9%	8.00	25.3%

Figure 7. Types of AAO partners

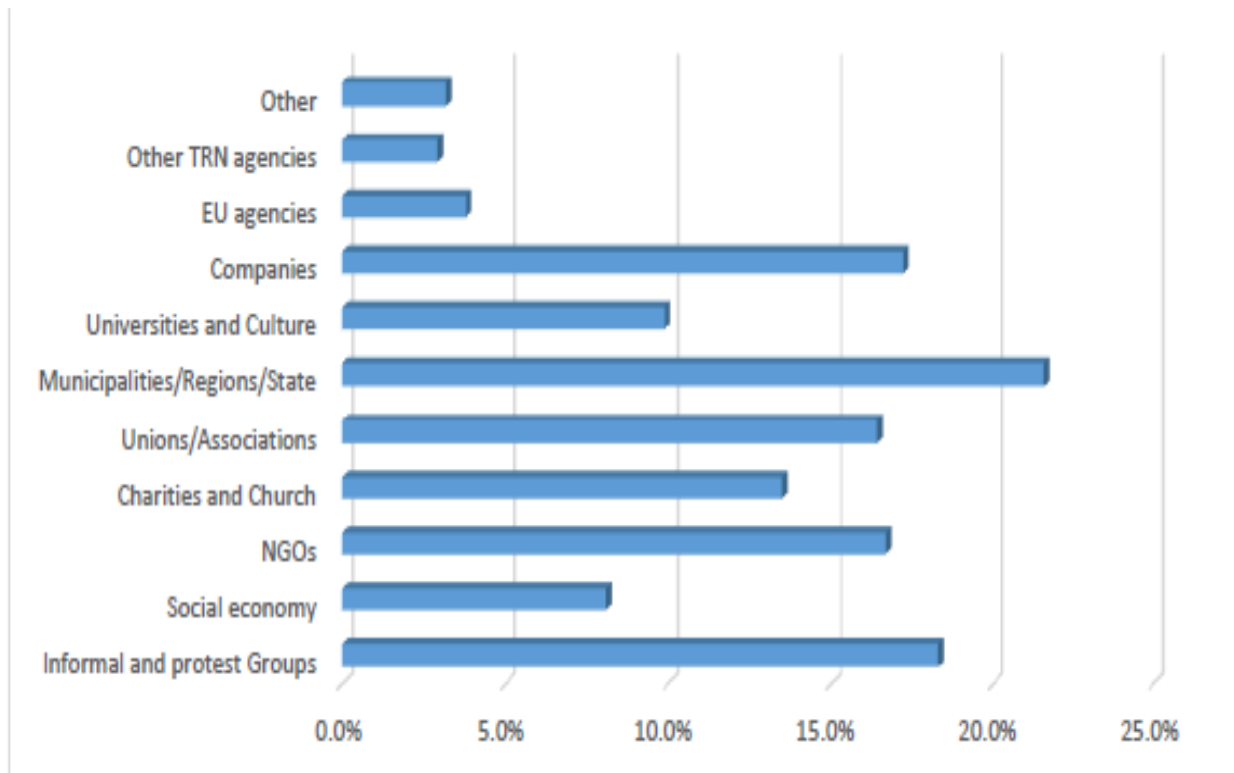


Table 4. Type of AAO partners per country\*

Type of Partners	FR (%)	GER (%)	GR (%)	IT (%)	POL (%)	SP (%)	SE (%)	CH (%)	UK (%)
Informal and Protest Groups	25,6	8,4	29,6	15,2	11,2	35,7	9,6	32,1	3,0
Social Economy	11,4	1,8	4,4	9,4	2,4	24,0	1,2	21,9	2,8
NGOs	10,2	8,6	23,6	12,0	28,1	17,2	19,8	26,1	7,4
Charities and Church	8,2	6,4	14,0	2,8	20,5	11,3	13,6	21,6	25,4
Unions/Associations	25,4	9,0	16,0	15,8	17,7	21,8	8,3	35,4	5,4
Municipalities/Regions/State	21,8	7,4	27,6	6,8	40,6	18,5	20,6	36,9	19,0
Universities/Cultural Assoc.	13,4	2,0	16,4	3,2	13,7	6,8	9,4	17,4	9,0
Companies	11,8	7,4	21,0	5,2	36,3	10,7	23,2	21,9	18,4
EU agencies	2,2	0,4	7,2	0,2	10,4	6,3	1,8	5,1	1,4
Other transnational agencies	5,4	0,8	5,6	0,4	6,4	2,2	1,2	4,2	0,4
Other	3,4	2,2	2,6	0,8	3,6	6,1	1,4	5,7	4,4
<b>N</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>500</b>

\* Note: Alternative activities are coded as dichotomous (yes/no variables) and therefore percentages do not sum to 100. Coding multiple categories was allowed since most of the AAOs engage in a variety of activities. Percentages are calculated based on the count of cases within each (country) category divided by the total number of AAOs of the country.

Figure 8. Type of beneficiaries and participants

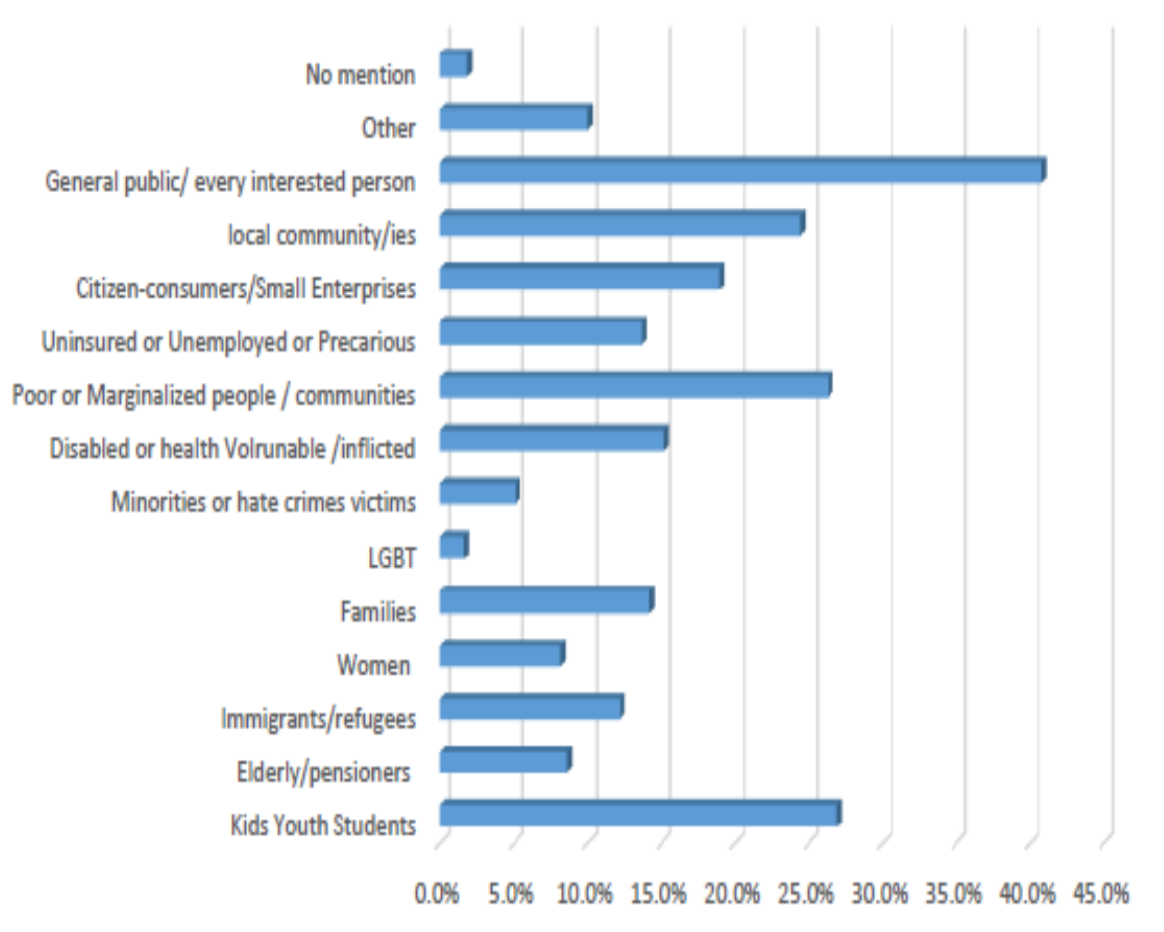


Table 5. AAOs increased demand for different type of activities since 2010  
(%, frequency in parenthesis)

	UK	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	Total
Food programs (e.g. free meals/ food banks)	52.4% (11)	11.5% (7)	54.8% (23)	58.6% (34)	10.4% (5)	34.8% (16)	35.7% (15)	32.3% (21)	10.0% (6)	31.2% (138)
Free material support (e.g. clothes, shoes etc.)	55.0% (11)	14.8% (9)	53.7% (22)	59.3% (35)	35.3% (18)	44.4% (20)	40.5% (17)	46.2% (30)	13.6% (8)	38.4% (170)
Homeless services	40.0% (8)	4.9% (3)	22.5% (9)	41.4% (24)	12.5% (6)	31.1% (14)	21.4% (9)	43.1% (28)	5.0% (3)	23.7% (104)
Housing problems advice	52.4% (11)	16.4% (10)	43.9% (18)	40.7% (24)	16.3% (8)	31.1% (14)	38.1% (16)	34.4% (22)	26.7% (16)	31.4% (139)
Free health care (e.g. medical exams, medicines, vaccines)	31.6% (6)	11.5% (7)	10.0% (4)	55.2% (32)	12.8% (6)	34.1% (15)	14.6% (6)	28.1% (18)	15.0% (9)	23.7% (103)
Free educational services and material (e.g. classes, books, etc..)	25.0% (5)	14.8% (9)	36.6% (15)	59.7% (37)	43.1% (22)	64.4% (29)	48.8% (20)	59.7% (37)	23.3% (14)	42.4% (188)
Employment advice/Training programs	76.2% (16)	24.6% (15)	22.5% (9)	43.3% (26)	23.4% (11)	57.4% (27)	47.6% (20)	47.6% (30)	33.3% (20)	39.5% (174)
Debt counseling (e.g. mortgage problems etc.)	42.9% (9)	8.2% (5)	12.2% (5)	39.7% (23)	12.5% (6)	27.3% (12)	24.4% (10)	23.8% (15)	10.0% (6)	20.8% (91)
Emergency financial support	47.6% (10)	19.7% (12)	27.5% (11)	43.1% (25)	24.5% (12)	33.3% (15)	17.1% (7)	29.0% (18)	23.0% (14)	28.3% (124)



Legal aid/legal services	26.3%	11.5%	25.0%	72.4%	27.1%	74.5%	46.3%	56.9%	31.1%	42.5%
	(5)	(7)	(10)	(42)	(13)	(35)	(19)	(37)	(19)	(187)
Networking and helping other groups/organizations/ associations	85.0%	61.3%	65.0%	67.2%	81.1%	63.0%	75.6%	76.9%	63.3%	69.9%
	(17)	(38)	(26)	(39)	(43)	(29)	(31)	(50)	(38)	(311)
Non-material support (e.g. interpersonal, emotional, etc..)	75.0%	27.9%	48.8%	64.5%	36.0%	52.2%	69.0%	75.0%	42.4%	53.0%
	(15)	(17)	(20)	(40)	(18)	(24)	(29)	(48)	(25)	(236)
General assistance and support in everyday activities	33.3%	8.2%	41.5%	31.0%	36.0%	37.0%	36.6%	34.4%	8.5%	28.1%
	(7)	(5)	(17)	(18)	(18)	(17)	(15)	(22)	(5)	(124)
Exchange of services and products	52.6%	29.5%	45.2%	52.6%	67.3%	51.1%	61.0%	20.3%	33.3%	43.9%
	(10)	(18)	(19)	(30)	(33)	(24)	(25)	(12)	(20)	(191)
Energy/Waste/Environment/Animal Rights issues	26.3%	61.3%	24.4%	41.4%	62.7%	44.4%	36.6%	23.7%	30.0%	40.4%
	(5)	(38)	(10)	(24)	(32)	(20)	(15)	(14)	(18)	(176)
Consumer/producer issues	15.8%	61.3%	27.5%	31.6%	62.7%	35.6%	47.5%	14.8%	23.3%	36.8%
	(3)	(38)	(11)	(18)	(32)	(16)	(19)	(9)	(14)	(160)