

CARPE Symposium Porto, 2025

Special Interest Group: Societal Challenges

Before the CARPE symposium:

1. Core group bringing together themes from the abstracts submitted for the symposium that could be expanded on for a funding bid such as the MCSA doctoral network bid.
2. Identify funding bid to be developed at the CARPE symposium and elaborate details of the three hybrid working SIG sessions on the 15th May.
3. Link for Call for abstracts on the Societal Challenge SIG webspace, deadline for submissions March 17th, 2025.

First SIG session on the 15th May: Introductions and developing theoretical frameworks

Hybrid Symposium to develop the theoretical framework for the selected funding programme and papers for a collaborative publication and to lay the foundations for a joint publication in a thematic issue of a journal.

In accordance with the current focus of the European Commission, the main focus of this hybrid symposium will be on **the role of the social economy in supporting social inclusion**. Broader topics that are related to **social innovation**, **social economy** and **decent work** are also welcomed.

The aim of our symposium is to reflect on the changed framework conditions (in politics, economy, and in the diversity of businesses and organisations), to review existing models (best practices) and to prepare the development of socio-political strategies for successful social inclusion, which would be implemented in the framework of a jointly initiated project.



CARPE Symposium

Porto, 2025

Agenda for the first session

1. Participants introduce themselves.
2. Introduction to the SIG and work carried out since the last CARPE symposium.
3. Setting aims: Theoretical development through sharing empirical and conceptual papers, planning a funding bid e.g. MSCA Doctoral Networks.
4. 5 short presentations (10-15 minutes) on the social economy.

Second SIG session on the 15th May: Development of focus and identify gaps

Agenda for the second session

1. 5 short presentations (10-15 minutes) on the social economy.
2. Discussion: identification of research and development areas related to the theoretical framework, outlining possible work packages for the proposal to be submitted.
3. Explore potential partners and contributions from outside of academia.
4. Define intended outcomes.

Third SIG session on the 15th May: Planning ahead

Agenda for the third session

1. Decide on a particular shape and focus for the bid.
2. Explore contributions of potential partners for moving forward.
3. Develop a plan for moving forward.
4. Develop a timeline of activities.
5. Identify roles and responsibilities of participants against the timeline.





Call for abstracts

for the

CARPE Special Interest Group 'Societal Challenges'

CARPE —the European Consortium on Applied Research and Professional Education— is a [strategic alliance of European Universities of Applied Sciences](#) which was founded in 2011. The partners aim to encourage strategic cooperation in European research and educational programmes.

Leading up to the **8th CARPE conference** in Porto (May 14-16, 2025), the Special Interest Group (**SIG Societal Challenges**) invites scholars from all partners to participate in a (hybrid) **symposium** that will take place on **Tuesday May 15th**.

Objective and focus

The overarching aim of the symposium, apart from networking and critical engagement, is to identify and develop papers that can contribute to a **collaborative publication** (e.g., a special edition of a journal) in the near future.

In accordance with the current focus of the [European Commission](#), the main focus of this symposium will be on **the role of the social economy in supporting social inclusion**. Broader topics that are related to **social innovation**, **social economy** and **decent work** are also welcomed. The sessions in the main conference (May 14-16) can be used to explore other areas of focus that attendees to our SIG might be keen to develop further.

Background

Social integration is severely challenged in times of neoliberal labour market conditions. Flexible forms of employment dominate the work reality and are accompanied by a high level of uncertainty. The labour relations reveal the tensions between value-laden expectations on the part of employees and high productivity demands on the part of employers. Further aspects such as social polarisation of rich and poor, marginalisation due to difficult and unfair access to work, and exploitation can also be identified. The frequency and intensity of these phenomena in the cycles of the market economy and the labour market shifts suggests a structural crisis that is embedded in social economy transformation processes, in which different subsystem demands need to be balanced.

The social economy can encompass a range of entities with different organisational models that operate in a large variety of economic sectors, including 'traditional' cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations, as well as social enterprises. Social economy organisations generally have strong local roots and primarily aim to serve communities under pressure, but have been increasingly recognised as important partners in the provision of social, health and care services. They all share the following main common principles and features: the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit, the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users ("collective interest") or society at large ("general interest"), and democratic and/or participatory governance.

A dominant form of employment is still paid work. For more than thirty years, however, this has been accompanied by processes of dissolution of boundaries — e.g., flexible work organisation, flexible working hours and flexible employment relationships (see Kratzer, 1998). These trends were initially praised as a positive contribution to the individualisation of lifestyles (see Beck, 1999). Today, the tide is turning and precarisation and disintegration are emerging, making social participation in the work context more difficult (see König, 2009). For example, the 'working poor' phenomenon and general dissatisfaction with one's working life appear as serious problems threatening the principles of social economy.

The processes mentioned here are changing the nature of work. In effect, social policy is under pressure to ensure conditions for a dignified life and decent work. Social economy organisations have been particularly successful in effectively addressing the specific support needs of diverse groups of beneficiaries at risk of social exclusion and poverty (e.g., people with physical or mental disabilities, young people without a school degree, older people, long-term unemployed, people with a migrant or ethnic minority background, refugees or ex-convicts), but there is a need to better understand how the different actors can leverage their resources, knowledge and capabilities to create a greater social impact of their activities.

The objective of our publication will be to reflect on the changed framework conditions (in policy, economy and across diversity of enterprises and organisations), describe existing models (best practices) and develop socio-political strategies for a successful social integration where economic system balances the profit dictates of the labor market and the postulate of a dignified life.

Possible research questions may include (but are not limited to):

- What is the relationship between the welfare state, market economy and social economy in different country (or regional) contexts?
- How to measure change towards social economy conditions and impact of outcomes achieved in a meaningful way?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of the social economy in addressing the problem of labour participation of vulnerable groups in different (regional) contexts?
- What is the role of technology in enabling or inhibiting the positive transformation towards the social economy?
- How to address and resolve policy-practice gaps in relation to creation of quality jobs and supporting decent work?
- How to strengthen the social economy in different contexts (regional ecosystems)?
- How to leverage (social) innovations from grassroots organisations to other organisations?

Submissions

Abstracts for both empirical and conceptual papers are welcomed. (Extended) abstracts (max. **1000 words**, excluding references) should be sent to: Kate.Miller@uws.ac.uk before **March 17th, 2025**. The following structure for abstracts is recommended: a clear problem statement, a practical and academic contribution, a concise methodology and a brief reflection on the (preliminary) results. After completing the review process, the authors will be notified ultimately on **March 31st, 2025**.

On behalf of the SIG Societal Challenges, the **organising committee**: Kate Miller (UWS), Judit Csoba (UD), Leendert de Bell (HU), Christo Karabadjakov (HAW), Eeva Timonen-Kallio (TUAS), Mira Lehti (TUAS), Aleksandra Webb (UWS) and Stephen Gibb (UWS).