

Letter to the attention of: Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Building autonomy and peace, strengthening democracy, and driving a fair green transition

Social economy solutions to multiple crisis

Brussels, Thursday 8 September 2022,

Honourable President von der Leyen,

Europe faces an energy crisis and economic and social turmoil fed by Putin's aggression against Ukraine. A crisis which overlaps with the climate emergency, the digital transition, and citizens fatigue due to the experience of the COVID19 pandemic. In this context of multiple crisis, the social economy is in the front line to provide solutions. Social economy enterprises are producing and distributing renewable energies and providing support to organisations and households to improve energy efficiency. They provide quality social services and work opportunities for all, including for those who have been forced to flee to the EU because of the war in Ukraine, or those internally displaced within the country. Social economy represents competitive entrepreneurial models that do not seek to maximise profits, but to reinvest them in quality services, jobs, and in the sustainable development of the communities in which they operate.

The social economy community is fully committed to work with the European Commission and the European Institutions to face the challenges ahead. Social Economy Europe believes that the European Union is equipped to overcome these multiple crises through more cooperation, solidarity, and innovation. Our entrepreneurial models can greatly contribute to shape a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient EU economy. **Every day 2.8 million social economy entities in Europe, employing 13.6 million people, make the previous statement into a reality, by offering concrete and innovative solutions to key challenges we are facing.**

The EU social economy is formed by a diversity of enterprises and organisations of all sizes. They are cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations, social enterprises, charities, and other legal forms. They all share the same features and values: the primacy of people as well as social or environmental purpose over profit, the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users or society at large, and democratic and/or participatory governance. Enterprises and organisations that operate in all the economic sectors:

- ❖ Healthcare mutuals provide non-for-profit and universal healthcare to 240 million people. Many other social economy actors as cooperatives, associations, foundations, and charities play a key role in providing high quality care and social services.
- ❖ 1.250.000 Europeans currently produce and consume clean energy through renewable energy cooperatives (REScoops), a movement that is likely to grow as by 2050, 45% of renewable energy production could be in the hands of citizens. The social economy is also very active in housing (cooperative and community housing) and renovation.
- ❖ Mutual/cooperative insurers are now responsible for more than one-third of all insurance in Europe, with a market share of 33.4% in 2020, representing premium income of €469bn.
- ❖ Cooperatives represent 83% of the agriculture market share in the Netherlands, 79% in Finland, and 50% in France, and the social economy plays a growing role in retail and sustainable consumption.



- ❖ Work integration social enterprises collect more than 1.100.000 tonnes of material with the aim of being re-used, repaired, or recycled
- ❖ Cooperative and ethical banks and financiers, micro-finance institutions, mutuals insurers and paritarian institutions, are key investors in sustainable entrepreneurship, social services, and the green transition.
- ❖ The number of cooperatives and other social economy organisations active in emerging and digital industries is growing fast. Platform cooperatives, for instance, owned by workers and/or users, demonstrate that decent work conditions are not incompatible with innovation. In parallel, cooperatives are key to strengthen the resilience of the EU's industry and the skills of the EU's workforce.

2021 marked a turning point for the European social economy, as the Commission adopted two ambitious initiatives to support the further development of these virtuous business models: the [Social Economy Action Plan](#) (SEAP), and the updated Industrial Strategy, which identifies the “Proximity and Social Economy” as one of the fourteen industrial ecosystems for Europe’s recovery. These policies, which are strongly connected to other major EU initiatives as the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the Green Deal, and the Next Generation EU among other; have the potential to drive an entrepreneurial revolution in Europe, that will contribute to not leaving anyone behind.

Our objective is to capitalise on the ambitious EU Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP) to promote social economy among new and young entrepreneurs, and create more quality jobs all over the EU, **growing from currently providing 6.3% of all EU jobs to 10% by 2030**. Many of SEAP strategic actions are already in progress as the proposal for a Council Recommendation on social economy framework conditions, the possible legislative actions on cross-border activities of association and other non-profit organisations, the InvestEU new financial products for social economy, the transition pathways for the social economy ecosystem, the guidance clarifying tax treatment of cross-border philanthropy, or the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy. All these actions should be implemented in close cooperation with social economy stakeholders, that also deserve a better recognition as employers in the framework of the EU social dialogue. Therefore, we hope to see the social economy high on the 2023 European Commission’s work program, as well as part of your State of the Union address.

I take this opportunity to **invite you to the first anniversary of the Social Economy Action Plan that will be held on Wednesday 7 December in the evening, in Brussels**. We would be very honoured if you were able to accept our invitation, and we are keen to exchange, also bilaterally, about how the social economy can contribute to provide solutions to some of our most pressing challenges as a Union. I remain at your disposal for any further information that you might need, and I wish you all the best in view of your State of the Union address.

Yours sincerely,



Juan Antonio Pedreño,
President of Social Economy Europe



Letter in copy to:

Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, EC Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People
 Mr. Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
 Mr. Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market
 Ms. Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
 Ms. Patrizia Toia, Co-Chair of the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup

About Social Economy Europe:

Social Economy Europe (SEE) is the voice of the 2.8 million social economy enterprises and organisations in the European Union. Created in November 2000 under the name of CEP-CMAF -the European Standing Conference of Cooperatives, Mutuals, Associations and foundations-, SEE is the European network representing the collective interests of all social economy actors as cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations, social enterprises, and other social economy legal forms. SEE is currently unites 20 members, structured in three categories:

- ❖ European umbrella organisations of cooperatives, mutuals, associations and foundations, as AIM, AMICE and Philea.
- ❖ National Social Economy umbrella organisation, representing the diversity of social economy actors as CASES (Portugal), CEPES (Spain), ConcertES (Belgium), ESS-France (France), Forum Terzo Settore (Italy), SZOWES (Poland), Ukrainian Social Academy (Ukraine) and the Wheel (Ireland).
- ❖ European networks actively engaged in the promotion of the social economy as: CECOP, DIESIS, CEDAG, ENSIE, EMN, Eurodiaconia, FEBEA, IPSE, and REVES.

SEE is the organisation providing the technical secretariat to the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup, a cross-partisan group of 80 MEPs belonging to the main pro-EU groups. It is also an active member of GECES (European Commission Expert Group on Social Economy and social enterprises), co-leads the Pact for Skills for the Proximity and Social Economy Ecosystem, and actively participates in the EU Platform to Combat Homelessness, the Industrial Forum, and the UN Taskforce on Social and Solidarity Economy.

