

Social Economy Europe's Contribution to the PUBLIC PROCUREMENT Consultation of the EC

Summary:

The Public Procurement Directive is strategic to achieve key EU Objectives such as industrial autonomy (Clean Industrial Deal), as well as a competitive, fair, and sustainable economy. At the same time, it must be accessible to SMEs and social economy entities - including representative bodies. Here are three key recommendations that makes this possible:

1. Reinforce Social and Environmental Clauses in the public procurement, the “most economically advantageous tender” criteria and the “MadeEU” criteria.
2. Facilitate SE and MSMEs Participation and adapting procurements to this type of organisations.
3. Enable capacity Building for SE in Public Procurement and raising awareness on SE contributions among public authorities.

Introduction

The Social Economy (SE) represents a major economic force in Europe with over 4 million enterprises and organisations employing more than 11 million people and generating over 912 billion euros in turnover ([2021](#)). Economically comparable to key sectors such as automotive and tourism, its economic relevance cannot be

overlooked. SE is defined by the EC¹ - in both the Social Economy Action Plan² and in the Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023³ - as entities that share the following 3 key principles and features: 1) the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit; 2) the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to further pursue their social and/or environmental purposes and carry out activities in the interest of members/users ('collective interest') and/or society at large ('general interest'); and 3) democratic and/or participatory governance (openness of management to stakeholders, democratic decision-making process, participation of members and/or employees in decision-making). Typically they endorse legal forms such as cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations, associations and social enterprises, as mentioned in the Social Economy Action Plan. All the most that the biggest added value of SE is about intangible and recognised by important international organisations such as the UN through its first ever resolution [Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development](#) and its second resolution on [Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development – UNTFSSSE](#), the ILO through a [Resolution on decent work and the social economy](#), OECD by approving a [Recommendation on the social and solidarity economy and social innovation](#) and the EU with the adoption in December 2021 of a [Social Economy Action Plan](#) and the [Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions](#), adopted by all MS.

In fact, SE has a proven record of supporting quality jobs, social cohesion, resilient and locally rooted employment, social innovation, sustainable development and green practices. Likewise, SE's added value also lies in ecosystem-building and co-design and representation - particularly at local and regional levels. SE is therefore a key ecosystem for the European Commission (EC) to achieve its goals of strengthening its competitiveness, clean industrial autonomy while preserving its unique democratic and social models. For all these reasons, it is crucial to reinforce SE's contribution to a more competitive and sustainable EU through adapted public procurement.

The EU is facing great challenges in different fields such as competitiveness, the twin digital and green transitions, geopolitical changes and social and democratic disruption. A tool that caters [14% of EU GDP](#), such as public procurement, must

¹ https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/about-social-economy_en#what-is-the-social-economy

² [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0778 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

³ https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/council-recommendation_en

support EU objectives such as competitiveness as well as key EU initiatives such as the Clean Industrial Deal, EU Pillar of Social Rights and EU industrial autonomy.

When revising the Public Procurement Directive it is important not only to look into the text, but also, and especially, how it is used. To this day, in many MS it is most frequently seen as subordinate to Competition law and focusing on business corporations. Therefore, the Public Market tends to privilege in practice large and medium corporations, which represent less than 10% of the EU enterprises and reducing de facto the competition amongst businesses. In fact, although the overwhelming majority (99%) of EU businesses are SMEs, SME bids and contracts with SME participation continue to be much lower in most MS ([Single Market Scoreboard](#)). Similarly, the success rate of SMEs in public procurement is significantly lower than their contribution in GDP (European Commission, *Analysis of the SMEs' participation in public procurement and the measures to support it*, 2019). This lack of competition in the public market due to low participation of SMEs is underlined in important reports such as *Analysis of the SMEs' participation in public procurement and the measures to support it* (European Commission: Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 2019). In order to provide access to public procurement to all EU enterprises, it is important to enable a level playing field. Even more so when it comes to SE enterprises and organisations. Adapting measures and actions to improve SE entities and SMEs' access to Public Procurement is essential not only to increase public authorities' choice but also to diversify its support in line with the Public Procurement Directive as well as the mandate of the EU strategic initiatives for social economy (i.e. Action Plan for the Social Economy and the Council Recommendation of 2023).

Public Procurement must be understood not only from the point of view of a market to be accessed, but of a strategic policy tool to be co-designed and co-governed. Therefore, long-term partnerships with intermediate bodies and social economy representative organisations and actors shall be enabled.

In all cases, when evaluating the impact of the Directives, Social Economy Europe calls for maintaining and strengthening, in the future, measures related to strategic public procurement, with a particular focus on ensuring the security of supply for essential services to European citizens, including through socially responsible public procurement.

Here are the 3 key recommendations that make all this possible:

1. Reinforce the use of social and environmental clauses in public procurement.

2. Develop inclusive and proportionate criteria for Small and Medium Entities including Social Economy Small and Medium organisations to allow their participation in public procurement.
3. Enable capacity building for Social Economy by raising public authorities' awareness about the added value of SE while supporting SE actors in participating and bidding for public procurement.

1. Reinforce social and environmental clauses in the public procurement, the “most economically advantageous tender” and the “MadeEU” criteria.

For Public Procurement to be an effective tool to enable the EU Objectives of competitiveness, industrial autonomy, Clean Industrial Deal as well as the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, it is essential to increase and improve the use of social and environmental clauses in public procurement.

Public authorities usually do so by allocating bids to the cheapest proposal, which is a shortsighted approach as it favours enterprises that reduce cost by lowering social law practice and environmentally sustainable practices, as stated in OECD's report *“Buying Social with the social economy: OECD Global Action “Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems”*. This approach is counterproductive in the long run, as in the end, it is the public authorities which will have to deal with social crisis and environmental and health consequences. Furthermore, this hinders both the EU Pillar of Social Rights and the Clean Industrial Deal objectives.

Favouring environmental clauses can also support short supply chains which in the end foster local employment and businesses (as well as organisations), therefore, supporting EU industrial autonomy and local and proximity economy. Shortening supply chains is essential for rural areas where SE entities endorse a crucial role in fighting against depopulation and disappearing services, which also aligns with EU objectives on regional development and rural revitalisation (Rural Pact, EC-OECD Social Economy Flagship Report).

Public procurement is an indispensable tool for addressing these challenges. The issue is that most public authorities and administrations (whichever level of governance) are not sufficiently aware of the existence of social and environmental clauses or fear that their use is complex or could go against competition law.

Moreover, they have been used to focusing on the lowest price criteria and are mostly formatted to think that is the best way to proceed. Even when social and environmental criteria are used, bidders are often merely asked if they meet or do not meet these criteria, without having to provide additional reasoning, which leads to a diminished value of these criteria.

The recently announced plans to introduce “Made in Europe” criteria in public procurement may also enhance the quality of goods and services procured, if the social economy is sufficiently taken into account. Social economy organisations, such as cooperatives, work integration social enterprises, mutual societies, foundations and associations, ensure that production and service provision are performed in Europe, protected from delocalisation, and that the local community benefits from the quality jobs and services provided by them. In particular, cooperatives, which reinvest the surpluses in the enterprise, also guarantee that the value created remains in Europe and does not get exported overseas. Therefore, social economy enterprises can provide the best value for money while contributing to increasing European strategic autonomy.

To overcome these barriers we urge the following:

- **Strengthening the application of social and environmental clauses** in any modification of the current public procurement directive.
- To encourage the application of a “**most economically advantageous tender**” (MEAT) criteria instead of the “lowest price option”, by setting strict limits on the maximum weight of the economic score and discouraging scoring formulas that reward excessive price reductions. This is to prevent a merely superficial application of the criterion, which would fail to ensure the achievement of its intended objectives. This crucial change takes into consideration altogether the quality of service or product, social and environmentally sustainable practice. This favors short supply chains, locally rooted business and organizations and therefore boosts local quality employment and, as such, participating in the EU economy and industrial autonomy. It fosters innovation and it contributes to the European social, environmental and local development objectives. Systematically adopting qualitative criteria also avoids a downward leveling of wages and working conditions. This change would integrate a **social and environmental scoring system** that **favors community-based enterprises, ensuring** that procurement decisions go beyond price considerations and integrate **social impact and sustainability metrics**.

- **Introducing “Made in EU” criteria that includes social economy enterprises.** In addition to their local nature and deep embeddedness in the local community, social economy organisations - such as cooperatives, work integration social enterprises, mutual societies, foundations and associations - are also structured in a way to prioritise their members and reinvest profits into the entity and the local economy. By developing “Made in EU” criteria that takes social economy into account and providing extra points for enterprises and organisations that also retain the value created in the EU, it is guaranteed that public money is not only spent strategically, but also remains within EU territory.

This approach is encouraged by different EU policies and reports:

- The **EESC Opinion *Review of the European public procurement legal framework* (INT/1092 - 4/12/2025)** encourages this approach when in paragraph 1.3 (Conclusions and recommendations) affirms that *“Given that taxpayers money is spent through public contracts, these must be awarded on the **most economically advantageous basis**, while emphasising the importance of non-price criteria, e.g., quality, innovation, environmental, sustainability and social considerations, especially workers’ rights and collective agreements. The EESC is also of the view that the lowest price should not be the only deciding criterion for awarding a tender.”* In the same Opinion the **EESC** insists on the general implementation of the MEAT criteria: in the General Comments (paragraph 3.9), reaffirming that *“Given that taxpayers money is spent through public contracts, these must be awarded on the **most economically advantageous basis**”* and in the Specific comments when developing that *“The EESC is of the view that public tenders must be awarded on the **most economically advantageous basis** for the best use of tax-payers’ money. Therefore, the **Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)** could be the gold standard. Hence, costs should not be the only deciding criteria and the public tender criteria should be based on relevant non-price considerations: quality, innovation, environmental, sustainability and social considerations”*.
- Likewise, the EESC through its *Opinion Review of the European public procurement legal framework* (INT/1092 - 4/12/2025) also directly supports the reinforcement of social clauses as it *“stresses the importance of the principle of **Socially Responsible Public Procurement (SRPP)** which aims to ensure that public authorities positive social outcomes (...) while supporting social*

economy enterprises.” In fact, the EESC “believes that a sustainable EU procurement policy can go beyond the narrow market failure paradigm, enabling strategic and public welfare-oriented procurement”, therefore, agreeing with a strategic view of public procurement. In its specific comments, the EESC “reaffirms its support for using public procurement to advance inclusive social policy goals”.

- **The Commission** in its Communication to the European Parliament and the Council **2025 Strategic Foresight Report. Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to thrive amid turbulence and uncertainty** (COM(2025) 484 final)⁴ identifies that the “Evolving global dynamics and excessive strategic dependencies have brought renewed attention to the use of public procurement (including joint procurement and preferential EU sourcing) as a policy tool to enhance open strategic autonomy and sustain industrial decarbonisation efforts.”
- The **Council** supports the strategic use of public procurement in its **2023 Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions**, when it recommends Member States to “encourage their contracting authorities to purchase goods and services strategically, pursue social objectives, also taking into consideration social innovation and environmental goals”.
- The **EESC opinion on Public Procurement/ Social Economy Enterprises (INT/1056 - 18/01/2024)** affirms “the provision of goods and services cannot be based on the erosion of social, societal, health and sustainability principles”. Including social clauses would guarantee quality jobs in coherence with European standards and the European Pillar of Social Rights, a positive impact and a quality service.
- The **EESC** in its **opinion on Public Procurement/ Social Economy Enterprises (INT/1056 - 18/01/2024)** also underlines “the importance of establishing innovative criteria with real, non-market value such as the commons, social (quality employment, inclusion and integration of vulnerable people) and ecological added value (environmental impact) and territorial proximity.”
- The **Committee of Regions** in the Opinion, **Creating an enabling environment for the social economy – the local and regional perspective**

⁴ eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0484

(08-09/02/2023) supports “*promoting socially responsible public procurement and the inclusion of social requirements in tenders*”.

- The **2024 Liège Roadmap for Social Economy** signed by **20 MS** also encourages public authorities to “*incorporate more sustainability and inclusivity criteria in public procurement procedures*”.
- The **Draghi Report** *The future of European competitiveness: A competitiveness strategy for Europe* recommends boosting EU economy by mobilizing public and private investment for green transition
- The **Letta Report** *More than a Market: Speed, security, solidarity* calls for “*a focus on the strategic use of public procurement to support the social economy*”.

2. Develop inclusive and proportionate criteria for small and medium enterprises, including Social Economy Micro, Small and Medium entities, to allow their participation in public procurement.

At the time being there is little competition in the public procurement bids as they are often intended for big projects, requiring important financial guarantees and are administratively quite tedious. This means that most enterprises, and particularly those locally rooted, cannot access these, as 95% of EU enterprises are micro enterprises. This is an impediment to the development of an important market (14% of the EU GDP) for SMEs as well as an obstacle to supporting locally rooted businesses. Therefore, given SE is constituted of 93% of SMEs, this mechanism applies to SE enterprises and organisations as well.

Often large companies do not work alone but subcontract part of their tasks paid by public authorities to smaller companies, taking a percentage of the bid for subcontracting to their account while reducing direct payment of services for SMEs and social economy entities. By enabling direct bidding to smaller enterprises and organisations, governments increase direct public support to local enterprises and organisations - including Work Integration Social Enterprises.

To overcome these issues, and to support the EU industrial autonomy we recommend the following:

- **Simplify process** and **minimize financial guarantees** in order to make public procurements accessible to SMEs. Therefore, harmonising and systematically providing templates of requested documents, and digitalising the procurement process – for both contracting authorities and bidders – are key recommendations.
- To this end, to keep allowing contracting authorities to **divide public procurement into smaller contract lots** (art. 46 from Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement) **is fundamental**. France is a country that has good experience in such practice of dividing public procurement calls in smaller lots. Lately we can look into the example of the Paris Olympics Games public procurement approach that can be found here: [ESS 2024](#).
- **Reducing late payments** from public authorities is not only a fair practice but a necessary complementary action to the previous points.
- **Embed the Council Recommendation's⁵ definition of the Social Economy** into procurement rules (legal and operational alignment)
- **Introducing mandatory supply price revision clauses within Article 72** from **Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement** would also be a key element for SMEs and SE entities, as it would provide the necessary flexibility to adapt to the economic changes and to inflationary tendencies.

Merge articles 20 and 77 of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement with the aim of establishing a minimum percentage of public procurement that shall be awarded through contracts reserved for the social economy

In doing this, Art. 20 should be maintained and made mandatory. As well, the constraints of Art. 77 should be more flexible:

- The three-years limit to the contract duration established in art. 77.3 should be extended.
- The requirement for the bidder not to have been awarded with a contract for the same services by the same contracting authorities in the three previous years in order to be awarded again should be reduced (article 77.2). Likewise, it should also enable framework agreements and repeated access via

⁵ Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions (C/2023/1344) https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/council-recommendation_en

representative or umbrella organisations, especially in social and territorial services.

- Make sure the public procurement directive is fit for the **SME Filter** of the **European Commission**
- **Ensuring reserved contracts for SMEs and Social Economy Entities** providing health, social, and cultural services, as referenced in **Article 74 from Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement**, and covered under the CPV codes outlined in **Article 77**, as well as - in regard of the new priorities of the EU - the list of services covered by these articles shall be widened to those providing housing, energy, civil protection, environmental and water management, financial services and primary education. The revision of art 74 and art 77 shall be carried out through collaborative procedures (co-design).

Legal and policy basis to support such recommendations:

- **The Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL** establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028-2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 COM/2025/565 final. In its **ANNEX XV - Union actions supported through the Facility (ref. 1. (c))** includes to *“support microfinance, social enterprise finance, social economy and measures to promote gender equality, skills, education, training and related services, social infrastructure, including health and educational infrastructure and social and affordable housing, including for students and young people, health and long-term care, inclusion and accessibility, with a focus on integrating people in vulnerable situations, including people experiencing or at risk of poverty, social exclusion or discrimination.”*
- Art. 20 from **Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement**, establishes the possibility for Member States to *“reserve the right to participate in public procurement procedures to sheltered workshops and economic operators whose main aim is the social and professional integration of disabled or disadvantaged persons or may provide for such contracts to be performed in the context of sheltered employment programmes”*.
- The **EESC Opinion Review of the European public procurement legal framework (INT/1092 - 4/12/2025)** actually shares most of the specific

recommendations that SEE suggests for facilitating SE entities and SMEs participation in public procurement. Concretely, through its Opinion, the ESCC calls for *“Retaining Article 77 of Directive 2014/24/EU is crucial: it allows contracts in the health, social, education and cultural sectors to be awarded specifically to non-profit organisations and **social economy entities.**”* , identifies the *“administrative complexity”* as a *“challenge”* that *“can be overwhelming, especially for smaller companies”*. EESC, also, suggests that *“Most large-scale contracts (...) could be split into lots, thus giving SMEs a fair chance to participate”*. Likewise, EESC states that *“Retaining Article 77 of Directive 2014/24/EU is crucial: it allows contracts in the health, social, education, and cultural sectors to be awarded specifically to non-profit organisations and **social economy entities.**”* at the same time that *“It highlights the proven value of Reserved Contracts in promoting employment for persons with disabilities and supports their continued use for **social economy enterprises** working in the open labour market in specific sectors.”* Finally, the *“EESC also recommends that the interests of SMEs and **social economic enterprises** should be promoted through, inter alia, a revision of thresholds which would help SMEs be awarded contracts from the municipalities more easily”* and calls for *“mandatory price revision clauses to account for changes in wages (...), as well as annual inflation rates above (...) 2% target, changes in energy prices and any other major changes that affect the execution of a contract”* **EESC opinion on Public Procurement/ Social Economy Enterprises (INT/ 1056 - 18/1/2024)** calls upon a more flexible approach to Article 77 from **Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement**

- **EESC opinion on Public Procurement/ Social Economy Enterprises (INT 1056 - 18/1/2024).**
- [SME Filter](#) of the **European Commission**

3. Enable capacity building for SE by raising public authorities' awareness about the added value of SE while supporting SE actors in bidding for public procurement.

To reinforce the capacity of SE entities to access public markets, it is important to create an enabling ecosystem in which the public buyer knows the specificity of the SE. At the time being public authorities know well business corporations and are used to applying a logic of lowest price bid, as it fears going against competition law. These fears and old habits interfere with the application of social and environmental clauses of public procurement directive. The non application of these clauses hinders the social and environmental EU objectives as well as the one of strengthening the EU industrial autonomy.

Public authorities need to be informed about the added value of SE organisations in terms of local and quality employment for all, social cohesion, sustainable development, social innovation, community commitment and inclusiveness. Likewise, the added value of Social Economy representative organisations shall be recognised by public authorities as key intermediaries for training, awareness-raising and implementation support in the Socially Responsible Public Procurement. Public authorities also need to be aware of which entities SE encompass, it is not enough to have a social objective, it is also essential to reinvest most profit in the social objective and to practice democratic and/or participatory governance, as defined in the Council Recommendation on condition frameworks for SE.

SE actors are crucial to the European economic landscape at regional and local levels, as they are economically as significant as most important EU sectors of activities while providing invaluable intangible added value. Providing them access to public markets (14% of EU DGP) is a way of supporting the EU economy, the SE ecosystem and more specifically locally rooted economy and social cohesion.

On the other hand, often SE entities are not always aware they can bid for public procurement, which would allow them to diversify their income and increase their economic sustainability. They need to be aware of the legal frames to advocate for better application of the social and environmental clauses as well as the most economically advantageous tender approach of public procurement directive. They probably also have to improve their capacity to answer these bids. In rural areas in particular, not supporting SE's capacity to answer public procurement bids favours few large-urban-based businesses without local roots.

Raising awareness on both ends of the public markets (the buyer or public authorities as much as the possible bidders or SE entities) is the only way to put into place a level playing field for SE while diversifying public authorities contractors.

Therefore we highly recommend:

- Improving coordination among public authorities at the different levels (local, regional, national and European) for a common understanding and application of public procurement. This can be done with **proper information and communication by the EU and MS to civil servants at all levels of government and administration**. Initiatives like #WeBuySocialEU or “Buying for social impact” communication campaign and training activities for local authorities and administrations are interesting examples of how to proceed.
- **Raise awareness about what SE is** to public authorities and especially about the **added value of SE enterprises and organisations**. It is crucial to stress that it is not enough to have a social objective to be considered part of SE, it is also essential to reinvest most profit in the social objective and to practice democratic and/or participatory governance, as defined in the Council Recommendation. These are usually statutory associations, cooperatives, foundations and mutuals, but other legal statuses may apply in certain countries.
- **Promote capacity building among public authorities at all levels** (local, regional, national and European), through training materials and workshops co-designed and delivered with representative organisations and SE entities - in line with partnership principles, utilising support from the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) through the TSI 2025 Work Programme, as to how to make public procurement accessible to SE. Such training should tackle the possibility of dividing bids into smaller lots (see recommendation number 2), underline the positive impact of diversifying public market allocation...
- **Promote capacity building among SE entities through information and training on the public procurement frameworks and tenders opportunities**. Enable collaboration through consortiums of SE and locally rooted SMEs and provide them with technical support. These actions can foster the participation and competitiveness of social economy to public markets. At EU level, the SE Gateway could be a useful tool to inform about public procurement directive. At local level SE representative organisations can play a key role in informing SE about the functioning of public markets, train them to be successful candidates as well as support the building of consortia.

- Beyond an approach of buyer (public authority) and supplier (the bidders of public procurement), a **co-design and implementation of services and goods between SME, of which SE economy actors and public authorities at local level** is an approach that has proved to be fruitful in different contexts to answer local needs. This not only strengthens trust among public authorities, enterprises and citizens, it also allows innovative solutions while empowering SE and broadly SMEs to participate in what could otherwise be complex procurement processes. It participates in building and supporting local ecosystems that bring together local authorities and SE entities.
- To further strengthen its role, the EU should **develop a common framework for measuring the impact and intangible added value of SE**, integrating codeveloped SE indicators into national economic reporting, and promoting dedicated European research and monitoring mechanisms. This will ensure better visibility and policy recognition for the ecosystem, reinforcing its contribution to a more competitive and sustainable public procurement market.
- **Public Procurement allocation bids must be monitored** by public bodies that supervise national spending and **made publicly available diligently and in due time**. Social Economy representative organisations should be recognised as legitimate stakeholders in monitoring, analysis and dialogue on SRPP outcomes. This would increase transparency and accountability over public spending, allowing Civil Society and SE representative organisations broadly to be informed about public expenditure and to monitor them. How much public spending takes into account social and environmental criteria? What proportion goes to SMEs? To SE? Diverted to **public sector administration**? The existence of such monitoring would indirectly be an incentive for public authorities to apply the principle of the most economically advantageous tender, thus social and environmental clauses.

Legal and policy basis:

- The **EESC Opinion Review of the European public procurement legal framework (INT/1092 - 4/12/2025)** which identifies as a challenge for firms the “*lack of transparency (...) because of incomplete tender lists*”.
- The **European Commission's Social Economy Action Plan** ensures the Commission will “*reinforce its efforts to raise awareness, foster the exchange of good practices and train both public procurement officials and social economy entities on how to use public procurements and concessions procedures to achieve social policy objectives.*”

- The **Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023** underlines the necessity of *“providing guidance at the appropriate administrative level(s) to facilitate access to public procurement by social economy entities”*.
- The **Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023** underlines the necessity of *“raising awareness of the added value of socially responsible public procurement among contracting authorities and enterprises and making expertise available to contracting authorities and social economy entities”*.
- **Committee of Regions in the Opinion Creating an enabling environment for the social economy – the local and regional perspective (art. 54 – 08-09/02/2023)**: *“asks for facilitation of access by the social economy to public procurement using opportunities provided already by the European Public Procurement Directive, and to promote capacity-building both in relation to civil servants and in relation to the social economy”*.
- **Committee of Regions in the Opinion Creating an enabling environment for the social economy – the local and regional perspective (art.53 – 08-09/02/2023)**: *“calls for policies promoting socially responsible public procurement and the inclusion of social requirements in tenders as a means to help develop the social economy sector”*.
- **European Economic and Social Committee opinion on Public Procurement/ Social Economy Enterprises (INT/1056 - 18/1/2024)** calls on the European Commission to *“create a dedicated section on <socially responsible public procurement> on the Social Economy Gateway”*. The same text encourages raising awareness on the added value of SE entities and the understanding of Public Procurement as a tool to achieve EU objectives.
- The **Liège Roadmap for Social Economy** signed by **20 MS** encourages *“European, national, regional and local public authorities to incorporate more sustainability and inclusivity criteria in public procurement procedures;”* and *“promoting also other forms of involvement of social economy entities in the design and delivery of services and goods”*

The framework of Socially Responsible Public Procurement shall allow both Social Economy operating entities - cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises - and social economy support structures and representative organisations to partnership with public authorities to ensure scale up of social economy entities, legal certainty – for both contracting authorities and tenderers – and social and environmental territorial impact.

About Social Economy Europe

Social Economy Europe (SEE) is the voice of the 2.8 million social economy enterprises and organisations Europe. Created in November 2000, under the name of CEP-CMAF⁶, SEE represents the collective interests of all social economy actors as cooperatives, mutuels, associations, foundations, social enterprises, and other social economy legal forms. Social economy enterprises and organisations of all sizes operate in all socio-economic sectors.

As of 2025, SEE has 28 members:



As the main network representing Social Economy ecosystem at European level, SEE holds the co-secretariat of the Social Economy and Services of General Interest Intergroup of the European Parliament⁷, is represented at the Civil Society Liaison Group of the European Economic and Social Committee, is part of the Commission Expert Group on the Social Economy (GECES), is observer member of the United Nations Taskforce on the Social and Solidarity Economy and supports the work of the Luxembourg Monitoring Committee⁸.

⁶ European Standing Conference of Cooperatives, Mutuels, Associations and Foundations

⁷ European Parliament – Intergroup on the Social Economy and Services of General Interest, official webpage, available at:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/intergroup/details/7907/Intergroup%20on%20the%20Social%20Economy%20and%20Services%20of%20General%20Interest> (accessed on 10 October 2025).

⁸ Social Economy Europe, “Institutions we work with”, official webpage, available at:

<https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/our-work/institutions-we-work-with/> (accessed on 10 October 2025).