

RIPESS EU - Contribution to the European's commission Social Economy Action

PlanRIPESS EU - Solidarity Economy Europe is the network that promotes SSE in Europe (part of the RIPESS Intercontinental network) and has members in 21 countries, national, sectoral and inter-sectoral networks. It aims to share practices, inter-cooperate and engage in joint actions that can promote and enhance the visibility of the Solidarity Economy movement and contribute to legal frameworks and public policies.

RIPESS Europe welcomes the EC's initiative for an Action plan, in line with the most recent developments, such as the Toledo declaration on Social and Solidarity Economy (December 2020) and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Here are some proposals for the Action Plan:

- 1) The Action Plan should address Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) instead of Social Economy: SSE is about transforming the economic system and being a vector for positive social and ecological change and just transition, not just a third non profit social sector. This implies to abandon the economic "growth" paradigm, which is incompatible with social and environmental objectives and equal distribution of resources and wealth, in favour of a wellbeing paradigm, for a caring society.
- 2) The Action Plan should address the measurement and statistics on SSE and on the social utility and positive impact it has on democracy, citizen participation, community, environment, dignified labour, equality, redistribution, non discrimination, etc, and the promotion of wellbeing indicators instead of the outdated and misleading GNP. The Action Plan should help spread know-how and practice of social balance measurement tools so that the impact of SSE organisation is not dependent mostly on their financial dimension, but on the contribution for general wellbeing and common good.
- 3) The Action Plan should promote forms of collective benefit and commoning: recognizing the value of collectively owned or managed assets, resources and means, and encourage their establishment through non market legal measures, such as community cooperatives, community land trusts, cooperative digital platforms and similar mutualistic non profit forms of shared use.
- 4) The Action Plan should allow to increase the inclusion of SSE in public procurement, for fair, safe, healthy and environmentally sound parameters to have priority on purely economic indicators and not be subject to market and competition regulations of the for profit sector.
- 5) The Action Plan should promote the European-wide recognition and framework norms on SSE enterprises and networks / ecosystems, including and beyond cooperatives, self employment and other collective forms. There is the need of a European common definition of "for benefit" or "limited profit" enterprise, with clear indications of how it distributes and uses earnings (which would make a clear distinction with for profit social businesses, who redistribute profits to their investors / owners).
- 6) As stated in the 2020 "A strong social Europe for just transition" Commission's communication, "the time has come to adjust and guarantee social protection in the new world of work and adapt tax rules to ensure that everyone contributes their fair share". The

Action Plan should allow to ensure and extend social protection coverage and guarantee systems that make it possible not to depend on the private, for profit financial market, but to build on mutualistic and cooperative forms, with public support and fair taxation.

6) The Action Plan should promote international cooperation among SSE actors in different continents, with programmes and financial support for exchanges and knowledge sharing – and support public policies for SSE that will strengthen real transformative potentials through SSE in local communities for just recovery during and after the COVID-19 crises.

7) The Action plan should encourage youth initiatives for SSE, education, training and peer exchanges to spread the values, ethics, practices and knowledge of SSE. It should help ensure trainings, skill development and educational programs for SSE organisations, so that they can get capacity to operate in recovery period with a main focus on social mission, democratic management and solidarity initiatives at the local, EU and global levels.

8) The Action Plan should recognize the SSE as a key player for urban regeneration, social innovation, circular and ecological economy, nature-based solutions, sustainable agricultural policies, climate positive solutions, social inclusion, peace building, gender equality and active citizen participation. It should strongly support fair trade, ethical finance, renewable energy communities, cooperative housing, community land trusts, social currencies, agroecological production and other forms and models of SSE enterprises, while discouraging extractive, polluting, energy and resource intensive practices, with clear targets and incentives.

9) Cultural rights and cultural cooperation are fundamental for the spreading of SSE, territorial and intercultural cooperation and the promotion of open knowledge sharing and cultural commons. The Action Plan implementation should ensure multilingual and multicultural expressions and promote a common yet plural understanding of SSE across Europe, as well as research focused on social solidarity economy ecosystems and enterprises.

10) The EU Commission should have an agency dedicated to SSE and promote a structured interaction between the SSE community and all the other key stakeholders, starting with local and regional governments and institutions committed to the promotion of SSE ecosystems.