



SAN SEBASTIÁN MANIFESTO

Social Economy: People, Planet, Action.

On 13 and 14 November 2023, the High-level Conference on the Social Economy: People, Planet, Action took place in San Sebastian, the capital of the social economy 2023, which gives visibility to the vivid and innovative reality of the Spanish, European and global Social Economy.

This conference brought together over 500 participants in two plenary sessions, featuring the most senior national, EU and international institutional representatives, focusing on the major advances that have been made in recent years in the Social Economy, in particular following efforts of many social economy actors and public authorities, including the previous and current presidencies of the council. In face of major challenges for the EU such as the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the crisis (due to the rise of energy prices), the conference also highlighted the commitment that aligns the social economy with the progress of the European project and the overcoming of these crises. Important conclusions were reached on strategic axes such as building and securing a highly-skilled workforce, contributing to the green and digital transitions, access to financing and markets, attracting young people and making the Social Economy more visible, by means of parallel workshops with the active participation of institutions, the industry and the general public.



Within this framework of reflection and work, we, the undersigned, present at the meeting in San Sebastian, acknowledge that social economy entities are key players in the European single market and in our societies, accounting for a significant part of the economic output and the innovative strength in the European Union. It is a global model that at the same time is deeply rooted in our territories, which characterises and identifies a European way of life.

According to the available data¹, 2.8 million social economy entities operate in the European Union, employing 13.6 million people. This represents 6.3% of the EU workforce. The European Union's social economy is made up of a variety of entities such as cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations, social enterprises and other legal structures regulated by the Member States. This set of enterprises and entities is tightly knit around shared principles and characteristics such as:

- ✓ the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit;
- ✓ democratic and/or participatory governance;
- ✓ the reinvestment of all or most of the profits and surpluses to 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').

Over the last few years the visibility of the social economy has consistently been on the rise, as shown by the adoption, in April 2023, of the **United Nations General Assembly Resolution** "Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development", the **European Social Economy Action Plan** presented by the European Commission in December 2021, the **ILO Resolution** concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy of June 2022, and the **OECD Recommendation** on the social and solidarity economy and social innovation of June 2022.

¹ https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/eu-initiatives/note-social-economy-data_en



During the Spanish Presidency, the Council adopted the first **Council Recommendation on framework conditions for the Social Economy**, another salient step towards the consolidation and strengthening of the ecosystem.

We also note the great efforts made by the Monitoring Committee of the Luxembourg Declaration, which is currently chaired by Bulgaria, to promote and coordinate at the European level, and which, after years of work, is finally aiming to include all the countries of the European Union.

We therefore applaud the growing recognition of the social economy that acts as a catalyst for social, economic and environmental innovation, mobilising an important part of the public and providing through their work solutions to the major economic, social and environmental challenges of our times.

Accelerating a just green transition, creating social cohesion and high-quality jobs, including people who are at risk or excluded, reinforcing the reindustrialisation, territorial cohesion, sustainable finance, the digitisation of the business and associative structures are just some of the areas of action of the social economy, next to their important contribution to the reinforcement of our welfare, care and social services systems, plus the training and re-skilling of young people and workers, and its key role in culture, arts and leisure.

We are also committed to an ambitious roadmap for the social economy, including **supporting existing initiatives**, such as:

- An ambitious implementation of the European Social Economy Action Plan, which has 2030 as its horizon, fostering exchange and cooperation between Member States, European and international institutions and entities representing the social economy, while advocating that the policies to promote the social economy should be of a permanent nature. We are likewise committed to contributing to the success of some of the major initiatives of the Action Plan, for instance:



- The recently adopted Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions.
 - The project "Transition pathway for the social and proximity economy ecosystem", which defines fourteen key areas of action to lead the green and digital transitions based on the social economy.
 - The Alliance for the Competences of the social and community economy ecosystem.
 - The European Youth Entrepreneurship Academy, as a key instrument to attract young talent to the social economy and to promote the teaching of entrepreneurship via the social economy at all levels of education and training.
 - Work with cities to develop Local Green Deals and/or green citizenship actions.
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- The renewal of the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup, as a key cross-party group to ensure that European policies take into consideration all social economy entities, their particularities and their capacity to contribute to the economic and social progress of the European Union.
 - Intensifying the role of the social economy in our external and partnership policy, as a key instrument for co-development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as for fostering alliances between social economy entities and their integration into strategic value chains.
 - Increasing the visibility of the social economy as an instrument to promote collective entrepreneurship, to contribute to a just green and digital transition, to generate quality jobs, to foster employee and citizen participation, innovation and the inclusion of people at risk or in situations of exclusion.



- Access to finance and markets. Mobilising when appropriate funds from the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism and other EU instruments; moving towards greater recognition of socially responsible and green investments and public procurement as well as other forms of involvement of social economy organisations in the design and delivery of services; moving towards better recognition of social economy entities in state aid rules; promoting the implementation of specific investment vehicles to finance social economy entities; and promoting the social economy as a model and ally of traditional enterprises, also by supporting the social economy ecosystem as well as business consulting services for the ecosystem.
- The involvement of associations and organisations representing the social economy, at all territorial levels, in the formulation and governance of public policies that affect us, promoting social dialogue and the creation of institutional participation bodies.
- The gathering of data about the social economy ecosystem as well as the development of social impact measurement and management.
- Finally, capitalising on the Social Economy Action Plan as well as the Council Recommendation on social economy framework conditions, we should cooperate on strengthening the European's policy framework for the social economy, which is of critical importance for the development of social economy entities that drive positive social, economic and environmental impact.



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