

<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME 2021</b> <b>SOCIAL ECONOMY CATEGORY</b></p>
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## ACTIVITIES IN 2021

### I. **Two action plans at the heart of a more social Europe: Action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Action Plan for the social economy**

The year 2021 is looking very promising for matters close to the hearts of the Social Economy category: in March the European Commission presented the Action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, while the European Action Plan for the social economy should take shape in the autumn.

The social dimension also features prominently in the programme of the Portuguese presidency, which will devote a social summit to the issue on 7 May. For its part, Portugal's Ministry of Labour will host the "High-level Conference on the Social Economy – The contribution of the Social Economy to job creation and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights" on 29 March.

The European Social Economy Summit is scheduled to take place in Mannheim, Germany, on 26-27 May and will be attended by an EESC delegation and feature a webinar hosted by the INT section.

The social economy does not live from good intentions, solidarity and the active participation of civil society alone. It also needs capital and investment, which is why it would seem useful to pinpoint promising areas in the new **Capital markets union 2020 action plan: A capital markets union for people and businesses** proposed by the European Commission. For this reason it is important to be able to rely, for the creation of a more social Europe, on the availability of patient capital for social-impact investments.

This is a very busy time for us, then, and it must serve as an opportunity for the Category and the EESC as a whole to raise the profile of its work on social economy matters, both by taking part in the planned events and by fostering further opportunities to delve deeper at Social Economy Category meetings.

On 29 March, the Portuguese presidency held a European conference on the role of the social economy in creating jobs and implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. The main points of the EESC's INT/925 opinion, which had examined the conference topic, were presented.

The Category's first meeting in 2021 was held precisely in an attempt to highlight the impossibility of implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights without convergence and specific attention also to economic issues. The meeting of 26 March, which was attended by representatives of the European Commission, the representation of the Portuguese presidency and the EESC rapporteurs who had worked on opinions relating to the Pillar of Social Rights and the single capital market, explored not just the role of social economy organisations in the successful roll-out of the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, but also what ambit we can imagine devoting to social-impact investments, by nurturing a debate that, starting with the presentation of the plan, will launch an exploration of the interplay between social rights and investment in the social economy.

## **II. The social economy and new European challenges for a single economy and market for people and businesses at a time of digital transition**

The social economy lives and thrives in the market and needs fair rules, patient capital and accessible innovations. Great attention should therefore be paid to the innovations that are being introduced by some important measures put forward by the European Commission, so that we can try to highlight the implications these important legislative measures may have in the field of the social economy specifically.

If the single market becomes increasingly digitalised, we need to take care to support social economy organisations in navigating effectively in this context of change. The three digital single market measures presented by the European Commission in the third quarter of 2020 – the **Digital Services Act** – the **Digital Markets Act** – and the **Data Governance Act** – and on which the EESC is drafting its opinions, merit special attention in order to highlight how social economy enterprises can be involved in proposals and initiatives concerning the digitalisation of markets.

In particular, social economy organisations can play a key role in reaffirming the centrality of citizens in digital markets. To do this properly requires a social economy digital strategy to draw on and manage the main propellant of the digital transformation: the data that will be the fuel of the digital transition. The Data Governance Act not only offers forms of "altruistic data management" carried out by non-profit organisations, but also the possibility of establishing data cooperatives as a form of horizontal and participatory data management, thus offering an interesting prospect for social economy organisations to continue to play our role in the democratisation of the digital economy.

It is clear, therefore, that social economy organisations can also play a decisive role in making the transition to a digital economy geared to the needs of citizens more participatory and inclusive.

The role not just of social economy organisations, but also of the many organised civil society associations, must be recognised in connection with building the European Union's future, not least because of the important part they play in democratising the economy and fostering the public's awareness and willingness to participate, including through the acquisition of digital skills. We have in mind, for instance, the active participation in the Multilingual Platform, which enables people to participate directly and to organise specific events. The Social Economy Category could help to nurture the involvement of social economy organisations precisely by encouraging the organisation of specific events.

We will devote the Category's second meeting, scheduled for July 2021, to this topic.

### **III. Ten years of the Social Business Initiative – an opportunity for evaluation**

The Action Plan for the Social Economy is expected to be presented in autumn 2021, and 25 October will mark ten years since the presentation of the Communication on Social Entrepreneurship on 25 October 2011. It will therefore be an important opportunity for the EESC's Social Economy Category to propose a meeting to take stock of the situation. There we shall be able to further explore some of the work done on assessing its impacts and the impact of legislation in the Member States of the European Union, and we can invite the authors of some of this research to the third meeting – as well as, naturally, Commission representatives to present the European Pillar of Social Rights. It will also be an occasion to revisit the EESC's studies on the social economy over the last decade.

### **IV. Communicating the social economy**

The year 2021 must also be an opportunity for the Social Economy Category to rethink the ways in which it can publicise its activities and how to highlight in general all the work the EESC carries out bearing on the social economy. This could cover the promotion of opinions and of initiatives taken by the various sections and, in the first instance, those carried out by the INT section.

### **V. Publications and studies on the social economy**

Over the past few years, the Social Economy Category has promoted a number of important studies on the social economy. We shall not be doing this in 2021, both because the large number of initiatives planned this year would risk what we produced not receiving enough attention, and because the Category needs to be able to devote the work in 2021 not just to the issues identified in this work plan, but also to exploring which issues more specifically it would be useful to investigate in the coming years so we can make an original and worthwhile contribution, as studies in previous years have done.

### **Schedule**

We plan to have three meetings in 2021:

- 26 March, morning
- 9 July, morning
- 27 October

**Giuseppe Guerini (spokesperson for the Social Economy Category)**

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