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***European Economic and Social Committee***

**SOCIAL ECONOMY CATEGORY - 2017 ACTIVITY REPORT**

**DRAFT**

**Brief description of the Category and its members**

In 2017, the Social Economy Category was composed of 38 members representing cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations, social enterprises and social NGOs. In recent years, the membership of the Category has remained relatively stable in numbers, but the Category has continued to widen the scope of its activities and influence.

**Main achievements of the Category in 2017**

The year 2017 has been marked by a great variety of activities and topics addressed by the Social Economy Category. These include the publication and launching of two studies on the social economy. An active outreach programme vis-à-vis external social economy actors was also carried out (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, the Federation of European Social Employers, the Mutual MGEN). Moreover, consistent efforts were made to promote the social economy as a priority for forthcoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU (Estonian and Bulgarian Presidencies). The Category also maintained regular relations with the European Commission and was represented in a high number of social economy events at the national and European levels. Lastly, it is reminded that the meetings of the Category provide the forum for information exchanges, peer learning and opportunities to contribute to social economy initiatives by other EESC bodies (e.g. the side event at the Gothenburg Summit in November, organised by the INT Section).

**Overview of the Category meetings outlining main topics and speakers**

* **4 April**, afternoon – 1st meeting.

At the first meeting of the Category for 2017 an exchange of views was held with the European Commission on its work programme, which includes the implementation of 30 actions and the development of five social economy pillars in 2017 and 2018. The second item on the agenda was an exchange of views with CIRIEC, on the interim version of the EESC commissioned study "*Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*". Thirdly, representatives of the forthcoming Estonian and Bulgarian Presidencies of the Council of the EU intervened on the subject of how to support the social economy sector. Fourthly, there was a discussion on the 2017 work programme of the Category and lastly, an exchange of views on how to measure the social economy and whether measurements should include the voluntary sector. It should be noted that at every meeting of the Category, the co-Spokespersons gave an update of recent European activities in the sector.

* **8 June**, afternoon – 2nd meeting.

At this second meeting, discussions concentrated on two topics. Firstly, a discussion with the Mutual MGEN, on the MGEN commissioned report "Not-for-profit is a European issue for the Social Economy". The study sought to examine whether an EU legislative vacuum exists regarding 'non‑for‑profit' enterprises and how this could be overcome. Secondly, a public hearing was held in order to present the final version of the EESC commissioned study "*Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*". Alongside CIRIEC, the European Commission (DG GROWTH) also intervened, highlighting the importance of collecting reliable and comparable data.

* **10 November,** morning **–** 3rd meeting.

The final meeting of the Category in 2017 was dedicated to three topics. Firstly, the presentation of the draft EESC commissioned study "*Best Practices in Public Policies Regarding the European Social Economy Post the Economic Crisis*". Secondly, an exchange of views on the EU-funded project for a European Network for Employers in Social Services (EU PESSIS 3). Lastly, an initial discussion on the 2018 work programme of the Category.

**Other events with the participation of the Category spokespersons**

* 19 January 2017, Strasbourg: Conference of the European Parliament Intergroup on *'Common Goods and Public Services*';
* 24 March 2017, Gozo, Malta: EU Presidency Conference on *'The Past, Present and Future of the European Social Funds*';
* 24-25 April 2017, Ljubljana: conference on *'Scaling up Social Economy Enterprises in South East Europe*'; launching of a mid-term plan for boosting social economy enterprises in the South Eastern European region and key recommendations;
* 12 May 2017, Brussels: Conference on *'New Technologies and Digitalisation – opportunities and challenges for the Social Economy and Social Enterprises*';
* 28 June 2017, Brussels: *'European Day of Social Economy Enterprises'*;
* 11 July 2017, Brussels: Roundtable discussion on *'Promoting Public Social Investment'*
* 20 October 2017, Brussels: Founding Conference of the Federation of European Social Employers (FESE);
* 9 November 2017, Brussels: EU Forum of the Social and Solidarity Economy, organised by the GUE Group of the European Parliament; introductory speech on the expectations of the Social and Solidarity Economy;
* 6-8 December 2017, Archamps, Mont-Blanc: 8th Edition of the Mont-Blanc Meetings; round table on *'The Social and Solidarity Economy – a new efficiency'*.

**Category initiatives (opinions, publications including links)**

In 2017, at the initiative of the Social Economy Category, the EESC launched the tender procedure and signed the contract for the preparation of a study with CIRIEC: "*Best Practices in Public Policies Regarding the European Social Economy Post the Economic Crisis*"*.* In the same year, the EESC commissioned study "*Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*" was published (https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/recent-evolutions-social-economy-study).

**Challenges and suggestions for 2018**

In 2018, greater efforts could be made to collaborate more closely with the Temporary Study Group on Social Economy Enterprises, with a view to aligning priorities and messaging. Closer cooperation could also be sought with thematic EESC bodies such as the Disability Rights Temporary Study Group, other Categories and key Sections (INT, SOC, REX and TEN). It is hoped that the President of the Social Economy Intergroup of the European Parliament will be replaced in the foreseeable future, in order to relaunch relations with the Category.

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**Overview of language arrangements for category meetings**

**APPENDIX**

**LANGUAGE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE "SOCIAL ECONOMY" CATEGORY   
IN 2017**

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| **DATE** | **DURATION** | **REGIME** |
| 04/04/2017 | ½ day | Requested: ES/EN/FR/IT/PL - ES/EN/FR/IT/PL  Obtained: ES/EN/FR/IT/PL - ES/EN/FR/IT/PL |
| 08/06/2017 | ½ day | Requested: ES/CS/DE/EN/FR/IT - ES/DE/EN/FR  Obtained: ES/CS/DE/EN/FR/IT - ES/DE/EN/FR |
| 10/11/2017 | ½ day | Requested: ES/CS/DE/EN/FR/IT - ES/DE/EN/FR  Obtained: ES/CS/DE/EN/FR/IT - ES/DE/EN/FR |

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