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**The EESC calls for an action plan on social economy enterprises**

On 1 July the EESC organised the **First European Day of social economy enterprises** (SSEs) under the title ***From words to action!*** This participatory event brought together some 120 social economy players and the EESC's institutional partners to take stock of the current situation, generate synergies and explore what measures still need to be taken to build an adequate ecosystem for social economy enterprises and fully unleash the potential of the sector.

In his opening speech Michael Smyth, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee (CESE), *underlined the importance of having a long term action plan for social economy enterprises and emphasised the need to reinforce cooperation between the institutions and also with the sector.*

Social economy currently accounts for 2 million businesses and 14 million jobs across the EU and has proven to be very resilient during the crisis, among other things in terms of employment.

Today's event showcased **three social entrepreneurs** who shared in an inspiring way their experience and success stories in setting up and developing social enterprises in Europe:

* **RREUSE** (Belgium), a network of social enterprises active in re-use, repair and recycling which employ people at risk of socio-economic exclusion. Approximately 77 000 employees and over 60 000 volunteers and trainees work for the network across 18 countries;
* **Progetto Quid** (Italy), a company which produces limited-edition eco-chic fashion handmade and designed in Italy from top-quality surplus stock. Quid currently employs 23 disadvantaged women and has opened a permanent flagship store in Verona;
* **Okus Doma** (Croatia), a cultural research project aimed at helping refugees and migrants integrate into their host society by preparing the food based on their culinary tradition.

Speaking with a common voice, the EESC, together with the representatives of the Slovak and of the future Maltese Presidencies, the representative of the European Parliament as well as the representative of the European Commission, stressed the importance to capitalise on the good interinstitutional cooperation in order to move forward and go further.

Branislav Ondruš, State Secretary for Labour, Social Affairs and Family of Slovak Republic, said that the Slovak Presidency would call on the European Commission to include **Social Economy** amongst their top priorities, as a tool to fight against poverty and social exclusion and to promote employment and prosperity in Europe.

Christian Cardona, Maltese Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, said: "The Maltese Presidency looks forward to engaging with the EESC and the European Commission to address the challenges *being faced by the social economy. Malta, together with other member states, has endorsed the Luxembourg Presidency Council Conclusion entitled: 'The promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe' and understands the important role of the social economy as one of the prime movers in the implementation of our European jobs and growth agenda".*

In organising this event, the EESC aimed to encourage the Commission to place the social economy high on its agenda. In view of the numerous participants' requests, the EESC will consider organising the European Day of Social Economy Enterprises again in the future to enable social economy enterprises to meet on a regular basis, share best practices, discuss common challenges and make their voice heard at European level.

For more information:

**Daniela Marangoni**- EESC Press Unit

Email: press@eesc.europa.eu

Tel: +32 2 546 8422

*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*