

**UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL
OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY
FOR EU GROWTH:**

THE ROME STRATEGY

Seizing the opportunity provided by the beginning of the new European Parliament's and European Commission's mandate in order to identify the areas of intervention deemed necessary by the varied actors who have worked to promote the spread and strengthening of the Social Economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe.

Building on the momentum of the Strasbourg Conference, on the Social Business Initiative, on the European Parliament's Resolution on the Social Economy and the work of the European Parliament's intergroup, on the work carried out by the European Economic Social Committee, and on the activities of working groups like the GECES.

Social Economy, despite being composed of a plurality of organisational forms each with their own history and specificities based on the diverse national and historical contexts, is indeed an area with clear common characteristics, brought together by the goals it pursues.

Based on the primacy of people over capital, “Social Economy” is an expression that unites a large and rich plurality of entities that contributes to pluralism in markets. In fact, social economy organisations generally adopt working methods based on cooperation and reciprocity, and as such they are characterised by democratic governance and transparent models that are able to guarantee the participation of a wide array of key stakeholders in society.

The Conference confirmed that the Social Economy contributes to economic growth and **it is already playing a vital role in all European countries.** Social Economy is contributing **to the implementation of several key EU objectives,** such as employment creation and retention, social cohesion, social innovation, etc. Indeed, its role has become even more significant in recent years, as social economy organisations **have proved to be a major anti-cyclical force** in confronting the economic crisis affecting our continent.

The Conference represented an important step in raising the awareness of the importance of the Social Economy also as a unifying framework and approach.

Regarding public institutions:

1. To clearly identify the social economy interlocutors within the following European institutions:

1.1. Within the European Commission:

- a. A clear political reference point among the Commissioners
- b. A dedicated structure with adequate resources proportionate to the importance of the Social Economy in Europe.
- c. An action plan (Social Economy Initiative) consisting of a new strategy, starting with the 2015 priorities.

1.2. Within the **European Parliament**, reconstituting the Social Economy intergroup.

1.3. Within the **European Council**, organizing regular meetings of the Ministers whose competences include the Social Economy and creating high-level expert groups at the national level.

2. In the course of the upcoming mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy:

2.1. To recognize the unique role of the Social Economy in attaining the objective of “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”.

2.2. To develop straightforward guidelines, monitoring and reporting tools for national and regional authorities concerning the implementation of the public procurement directive at the national and local levels.

2.3. To expand the modes of partnership between the public sector and social economy organizations within a logic of subsidiarity, co-design and coproduction.

2.4. To monitor and report the extent to which European Structural Funds are being used at the national and regional levels to promote and support the Social Economy.

4. To improve the availability of funding options and financing solutions for the Social Economy by:

4.1. Encouraging traditional banks to enhance their risk assessment practices in order to more accurately estimate the risk associated with lending to social economy organisations;

4.2. Promoting the creation and strengthening of dedicated financial instruments and institutions;

4.3. Increasing lending and equity participation by creating dedicated guarantee funds;

4.4. Encourage social economy actors to mobilize their own financial resources for the development of the Social Economy, e.g. through the creation of mutualistic funds.

5. Considering that social impact measurement remains a non-consensual issue, further dialogue between the Commission and social economy organizations is necessary. Before proceeding further, it is important to facilitate an exchange of information among all the relevant stakeholders and to carefully monitor and evaluate early experiments.

Regarding social economy actors:

6. To increase the level of self-awareness of the actors with regard to their belonging to the European social economy beyond the specificities of the various organizational models. Particularly by developing and promoting:

6.1. The interaction and collaboration among different ownership and organizational models of the Social Economy;

6.2. Specific managerial competences and skills;

6.3. Research and knowledge-building activities.

8. To favor the process of innovation and experimentation, including in activity sectors not traditionally connected to the Social Economy, and in collaboration with other market actors.

9. To foster a culture of evaluation by recognizing the added value of social economy organizations and improve their capacity to evaluate and report the social and economic dimensions of their actions by developing methodologies and indicators that are consistent with their nature and specificities.