



RIPESS EU – Solidarity Economy Europe

5th General Assembly 20-22 June 2016, Villarceaux (Paris)

Report

The General Assembly (GA) took place on Tuesday June 21, 2016 from 14 h to 17 h, in the premises of the Bergerie at Villarceaux.

The originally planned agenda was slightly changed in order to allow the Treasurer Kenneth Quiguer to present budgets before the end of the GA as previously planned.

Agenda

- 1) Validation of the new membership requests
- 2) Strategic orientations discussion: activity report and action plan
- 3) Validation of the financial accounts 2015 and 2016 projected budget
- 4) Amendment of the Articles of Association
- 5) The Advisory Council
- 6) Designation of delegates to the RIPESS Intercontinental
- 7) Renewal of the Coordination Committee
- 8) Prospects for the hosting of the next Congress in 2017

1. Validation of the new membership requests

Five networks from 4 countries were presented the day before the Assembly (on Monday, June 20) during the evening and in the morning before the workshops and requested membership:

- Rete Italiana di Economia Solidale (Tavolo RES), Italy
- ENERCOOP (Coopérative d'énergie alternative), France
- Technologie Netzwerk Berlin, Germany
- Rete Trentina dell'economia solidale (Trentino Arcobaleno), Italy
- Finnish Solidarity Economy Network (Commons.fi), Finland

The General Assembly voted unanimously for each new member, minus one abstention.

Six other members were accepted as observers:

- Ideas Factory (Bulgaria)
- Omnicare coop (Malta)
- RedPES (Portugal)
- Ekumenica Academy Prague (Czech Rep.)
- Synallois coop (Greece)
- An individual (Slovakia)

2. Strategic orientations discussion: activity report and action plan

Eric Lavillunière (INEES) illustrated the development made by the Coordinating Committee after the Berlin 2015 GA on the strategic orientations document. Josette Combes (MES) introduced the activity report 2015-2016, after which a discussion took place. The main issues raised were:

Orientation of members and potential members and organisation of next Assembly

- Proposal by Judith Hitchman (Urgenci) to organise a seminar / activity for the integration of new members.
- Proposal by Bruno Lasnier (MES) to hold, prior to the next Congress, a seminar around the work proposed by the working groups. A first document should be subject to discussion. The organization of the next Assembly and the improvement of the website could be used as tools in a collective work, starting from the themes discussed in the working groups and the Panorama of SSE.
- For future presentations of the Panorama, it is suggested to use short videos and graphic information; these tools should be derived from the work of the Panorama group.

On the public policies and the SSE

- For the map of public policies promoting SSE, Françoise Wautiez (Ecosol) has developed a prototype (in Europe and beyond). Interoperability should be operational shortly.
- A conference on public policy at European level will take place in Bilbao during the Congress organized by REAS (10,11 and 12 November). In the RIPESS Intercontinental there is a GT which is responsible for promoting the ESS within the United Nations.
- Representatives for RIPESS Europe (Judith Hitchman and Jason Nardi; but also other members such as the UFISC and APRES-GE) have worked and done missions in connection with other networks of civil society and the Inter-agencies Task Force on the ESS of the UN, in particular on the Agenda 2030 - sustainable development goals -, in terms of recommendations for Europe.

Alliances and convergences spaces

The question of the construction of alliances has been raised, for example with the networks of cooperative renewable energy or other forms of networked economy.

The Working Group on "Rethinking the economy" proposes to take the responsibility for follow-up on these issues.

A specific space must be dedicated to convergences, all those that may be useful. For example, the MOOC ('Massive Open Online Courses') Synergia - with the P2P Foundation and other partners, is now in the pilot project phase and a residential seminar is planned in Tuscany in September 2016, with a program that includes also the SSE.

The SSEDAS/SUSY project led by the Italian ngo COSPE project on the local relationship between ESS and development is available for collaborative activities (meetings, dissemination, etc.). It will end in January 2018. So far the research work is completed. A map of the alternatives is being updated in collaboration with ESSglobal and RIPESS Europe.

The STOPTAFTA collective could be contacted (member of the UFISC can facilitate) to help discuss on the trade issue and could be mobilized for the next Congress.

Hungary will host the forthcoming conference on the Degrowth end of August. RIPESS EU could try to participate and have its next Coordination committee on that occasion (hosted by KIFESZ).

Intercontinental RIPESS representatives will be present at the World Social Forum in Montreal (Quebec, Canada - August 2016) and may be 1 or 2 members of RIPESS Europe.

The Mediterranean dimension

The further opening to the whole Mediterranean area and work in the direction of migrants and refugees are considered important for the European network. The members of the United Kingdom are trying to assemble a delegation to go north of the Syria and meet local organizations. How can RIPESS Europe participate? RIPESS EU should work on promoting existing good practices in the area and more specifically those related to the refugee crisis.

Urgenci has recently participated in the creation of a Mediterranean network which should be connected to RIPESS as well as with actors of what is happening in Syria. The XES prepares to do the same thing. A specific meeting on food sovereignty should be organized and interested members of RIPESS will be invited.

We must continue to build up from what the members are working on. Ripess is the sum of member organizations and the dynamics that are ensuing from them.

3. Validation of the financial accounts 2015 and 2016 projected budget

The Foundation for the Progress of Humankind (FPH) is committed to the RIPESS EU triennial agreements. The budget has been increasing since 2014: it rose from € 25,000 to € 115,000. This increase is due to the intensification in the programme of Ripess Europe's activities and includes the integration of the Socioeco.org activity by Ecosol, with specific annual funding of € 55,000.

The FHP - Ripess Europe agreement was thus of € 60,000 for 2015, year of European Congress.

A payment of € 11,000 was made to the Forum S.O. - the member organisation which organized the Solikon (room rental, interpreting costs, etc.). The Congress has mobilized international speakers and there was an increase in the displacement costs (accommodation, food, etc). Travel costs for the CoCo and the members of the Advisory Board members have also been covered in this sum. The coordination of the RIPESS EU office was entrusted to Solidarius (half-time of Jason Nardi). Funding regarding the link with RIPESS intercontinental have not been spent and were postponed for 2016.

Some questions were raised:

Is a single source of financing not a danger for the organisation?

RIPESS EU has the desire to diversify the sources of funding (and for this reason in 2015 the network participated in the

presentation of 6 European projects at the request of members or close partner organizations), but at the same time does not want to increase the budget in a significant way, which would profoundly change the nature of its organization.

The financing of the FPH, in any case, is not necessarily seen as a dependency but as a partnership. The funds are placed in the cooperative Banca Etica in Italy.

Is it possible to vary membership rates according to the budget of the organizations?

The statutes could be changed so that the rates are proportional, but the basic rate is kept voluntarily down so that all organizations can easily contribute. It would be also possible to think of a voluntary contribution of the larger networks in favour of RIPESS. The current number of members would not be sufficient in any case to finance the necessary coordination work.

To manage the structural need for the facilitation of this network, including the need for strengthening the position of coordination, the CoCo is mandated to make a proposal to the next GA. The GA entrusts to the CoCo for the management of the association.

4. Amendment of the Articles of association

The coordination Committee had proposed amendments to the Articles of association in order to facilitate the accession of new members, not necessarily in the form of network, as it was before defined. In particular, the proposed amendment of article 7 was focused on the following point: add the associate membership status, which can be an active member but cannot be part of the coordination committee. In Barcelona (founding Congress) it was decided to accept informal networks as members, but not organizations or individual. The definition of network in this case does take into account its legal form and structure; nevertheless, it can engender confusion. Putting aside the question of the Statute, there are many countries in Europe who have not yet organized a Solidarity economy network and need that RIPESS EU remains an open network. The debate that followed changed the proposal.

If the idea is to give to RIPESS Europe a better organization and give equal access to local and national initiatives, this should be specified. The Assembly agrees to vote the change in article 7 on who can become a member, adding: "and any organization active in the solidarity-based economy" in the first part. Individual members may also apply as observers.

With regards to the issue concerning governance, Article 4 which rules on the access to the coordination Committee is maintained. The statutes amendment vote: unanimous less 1 abstention.

5. The Advisory Council

Created in Lille during the 2013 GA, it has been tested for three years. Two components out of four (Jean-Louis Laville and Rogerio Roque Amaro) have produced the text on social innovation presented in Brussels in January on the occasion of the EFSSE and made a proposal to continue in the next year (see annexed) with an expansion of the members and a focus on public policy. Some women should join the group. Better interaction is desired between the Advisory Council and the Coordinating Committee, with more frequent reports and more sharing of information with all the members.

6. Designation of delegates to the RIPESS Intercontinental

Judith Hitchman and Jason Nardi were elected at the Lille GA to represent the RIPESS Europe in the RIPESS intercontinental board. Judith Hitchman became President of Urgenci and for this reason the international representation team wanted to add a new person. To follow the international meetings, the person considered as having the required skills, Josette Combes, has been proposed by the CoCo to represent, with Jason Nardi, RIPESS Europe in RIPESS Intercontinental board. Josette Combes agreed for a renewable two years mandate, until someone else can play this

role.

Judith Hitchman wishes to continue to sit at the RIPESS Intercontinental board and will give up her mandate only if her candidacy as an international structure (Urgenci) is definitely accepted by the CA of the RIPESS International in September. The proposal was put to vote: unanimity less 3 abstentions. The mission of Josette Combes will begin as soon as the Board of RIPESS Intercontinental has validated the election of Judith Hitchman / Urgenci as part of the Board.

7. Renewal of the Coordination Committee (CoCo)

Only one member of the CoCo, ADEPES, had finished its mandate of three years.

Bérénice Dondeyne (ADEPES) represented herself with her substitute Denis Coutens (accepted)

Bruno Lasnier, member of MES, was proposed as alternate for Josette Combes (accepted)

Judith Hitchman indicates that Monika Onyszkiewicz (Urgenci Poland) should go on maternity leave and proposed that Gaëlle Bigler (Urgenci Switzerland) replaces her (accepted).

New nomination: Vera Gyolay from the Good Economy platform of Croatia. She wants to become a more active member within the network (accepted).

8 Prospects for the hosting of the next Congress in 2017

The proposal to make a preparatory seminar before the next Congress has been validated, as well as a meeting on the Mediterranean dimension of the ESS.

The Member of the Greece proposed to organize the next GA at the same time as a strong Greek network festival in spring time 2017. It is suggested to be also in connection with the SUSY/SSEDAS project.

RIUESS - the inter-university network for SSE - has proposed an alliance in the context of its next Colloquium at the University Cadi Ayyad of Marrakech and Université de Haute-Alsace Marrakech, from 22-24 may 2017 (Morocco) on how to do training in social and solidarity economy.

Malta will ensure the Presidency of the EU in 2017. A proposal was issued by Omnicare cooperative for a meeting in Malta in spring 2017.

Conclusions

The second part of the year 2016 will be rich in events. There is a need to find a joint programming in order to ensure the representation of RIPESS EU and to be connected to other networks and initiatives. The Coordination Committee welcomed the arrival of new members, especially from the East and the North of Europe, as well as an important sector like renewable energy with Enercoop.

They brought a beautiful energy and validated the relevance of a European network for the promotion of the ESS. The network strengthens the actors in the exercise of their own activities and can carry on their dynamism and creativity during the inter-network meetings and with the European institutions.