



RIPESS EUROPE – Solidarity Economy Europe  
5ème Assemblée Générale

## Workshop 6

# European laws and public policies for Social Solidarity Economy

Convenor: Bruno LASNIER (MES), Patricia COLER (UFISC)

### **Introduction**

The political construction of Europe based only on the vision of the single market is now leading to a reduction of democracy and isolation. The neo-liberal decision on budgetary restrictions and public intervention are locking territories into a logic of privatisation and financialisation. The principle of competitive free trade is the dominant model, with regulations on State subsidies, undermining of the social model of Europe and the a-democratic negotiation of the free trade agreements such as CETA and TTIP that encourage the introduction of private arbitration principles and the definition by experts of a normative framework.

However civil society is also organising, mobilising at local and European level and developing new solidarities and cooperation. Citizen's solidarity economy initiatives are trying to reinsert the economy into policies and at social level by inventing solutions in an ever-changing world. By linking different economic and democratic approaches, they are defending both principles and practice to build another approach to European policy.

European legislation and programmes that are both thematic and cross-cutting are starting to take social and solidarity economy into account. They are becoming progressively consolidated in the legislative and internal regulatory frameworks of States. The recent Luxembourg Declaration\* encourages policy-making based on adapted ecosystems and that support social economy enterprise initiatives. The European Structural Fund programmes for research and mobility can also contribute to supporting initiatives. State legislation on subsidies is becoming more flexible.

The different definitions that exist – social economy, solidarity economy, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship – all cover separate economic concepts. The term social enterprise as used by the European Commission heavily underlines the social ends in the definition; this excludes many cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations, unlike the French law on SSE. Furthermore, according to accepted usage, very different kinds of public policy are proposed and implemented.

**So what new European strategy is being built for the post-2020 period? What new orientations for solidarity economy can it support? What proposals for supporting solidarity economy initiatives at territorial should be included in European policies?**

*\*Luxembourg Declaration – A Roadmap towards a more comprehensive ecosystem for social economy enterprises - <http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/communiqués/2015/12/04-declaration-luxembourg/>*

## Summary of the workshop

The debates were mainly focused on the emergence, in different European countries, of laws in favour of the SSE and in particular on the French law for the SSE.

Participants notably questioned the interest of these laws: do we need specific legislation on the SSE, and if yes, why? How to ensure that these laws are good laws and that they are applicable?

This first questioning helped us to:

- To differentiate between different types of legislation in favour of the SSE and point to the need for distinguishing among:
  - framework laws which are designed to promote and make visible the social and solidarity economy; they allow to assert the SSE as another way to develop the economy and not as a sector of activity, as well as in defining the perimeter.
  - regulatory laws that are intended to implement ways to help and support initiatives of the SSE in terms of taxation, creation of financial tools, regulations, agreements with the local community...
  - recognition of new statutory framework laws that provide a legal framework for innovative forms of economic organization.
- Point the need for semantic clarification between the different terms used in Europe: social economy, solidarity economy, SSE, social enterprise, social business, social utility, social innovation...
- De pointer le besoin de clarification sémantique entre les différents termes utilisés en Europe : Économie sociale, économie solidaire, ESS, entreprises sociales, sociale business, utilité sociale, innovation sociale....
- To question the process of these legal frameworks : it is clear to participants that the process ' for the development of public policies and legislative frameworks for the SSE can be relevant only if it is based on a participatory dynamic.

The sense of SSE actors of being disconnected from what European institutions have done on the issues of the SSE and of having no visibility of the action(s) promoted by networks at European level, nor on the results produced by these action emerged from the workshop. All share the belief that Ripess Europe must be a strategic actor for the ESS to play not only at the level of the European Community but also strengthen the power to act in each country. Ripess Europe must also act as a facilitator between the actors of the civil society and political institutions.

Finally all are convinced that the network must build spaces for exchange between its members to promote the sharing of information and the emergence of shared knowledge on this issue, but also the construction of a common advocacy platform.

## **Proposals:**

On the basis of these exchanges three proposals have been made by the workshop:

### **To set up an Observatory on the legislations promoting the SSE:**

- collect information on the development of public policies for the ESS and the legislation of the different European countries and the European Community and make them accessible to members.
- Produce a comparative analysis of the different laws both in terms of content on the development process.
- Clarify the different definitions and the interactions between them.
- Clarify and differentiate the expected outcomes of the laws in favor of the ESS.
- Equip the SSE actors on good practices.
- Diffuse information to countries of other continents on what we produce in Europe on this topic.
- Means: tools of capitalisation and dissemination info ; socioeco.org website plus a collaborative workspace on this theme.

2. **Build a European campaign for another economy::**

- Build a common advocacy and bring it to the European institutional level as well at the level of the European Community in its various States through the members of the network
- Bring the collective contribution of the network (claims and questioning) on European policy in favour of the other economy within the European institutions.
- Build the operational conditions of our participation in the Working Group of the commission on SSE and notably to organize the operational construction between the members and the representative of the network. And regularly feed the members of what resulted out of this work.

3. **Build a space of Exchange and cooperation within the European Ripess:**

- Organise a cycle of meetings
- Create an collaborative space on the website to complement the space of repository of documents and information on the socio-eco website
- Have a permanent working group on this theme.