




PROMOTING SOCIAL ECONOMY AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AS A DRIVER FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

**Recommendations on the international dimension
of the European Action Plan for Social Economy**



This document aims to promote concrete recommendations to fuel the debate on the international dimension of the European Action Plan for Social Economy that will be presented by the European Commission in the fourth quarter of 2021. It aims to highlight and emphasize the priorities for improving not only the effectiveness and coherence of European policy, but also its visibility in the field of social economy¹ for the period 2021-2027.

These recommendations have been formulated by SSE International Forum after consultation with its network of members spread over the African, American, Asian and European continents.

The United Nations Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) open a space for inter-cooperation between public and private actors, consolidating a global partnership for sustainable development and essential services. In this context, the European Action Plan for Social Economy is a powerful lever to activate the global social economy movement. The aim is for private actors such as enterprises and organizations of the social economy, networks, and public actors ranging from EU Delegation officials to international organizations, institutions at various levels of governance in member countries and in third countries, to be involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. In this document, we will use indistinctly the term Social and Solidarity Economy - with and without capital letters - as well as its three-letter abbreviation SSE, the term Social Economy - with and without capital letters - as well as its two-letter abbreviation SE.




1. INTEGRATING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY INTO POLICY DIALOGS and development programs with third countries or regional organizations

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

→ **Promote the social economy in third countries or regional organizations.** This should (1) take into account the **diversity of expression of this sector** on the different continents; (2) recognize it as an **instrument for building and promoting democracy and human rights**, as a **tool for human and sustainable development**, and as a **mechanism for inclusion in the current pandemic context**; (3) emphasize the **creation of quality and sustainable jobs** and the benefits that the social economy generates for **individual and community autonomy**, especially for **young people and women** and, more broadly, for all **people in situations of exclusion**.

→ **Clearly highlight the strategic interest that the social economy constitutes for the European Union and integrate it into the general orientations of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**, as it plays an essential role in the global approach combining **security, diplomacy and development** and helps prevent and **resolve conflicts, maintain stability**, and develop States and geographical areas whose situation constitutes a direct security risk for the European Union.

→ **Commission an annual report on the state of the social economy in the world from the European External Action Service (EEAS)** to be adopted by the European Council; this aims to provide an overview of the evolution of the social economy and of the actions of the European Union during the year, as well as recommendations for the following years.



→ **Include the social economy as a cross-cutting theme and as a foundation for development cooperation policy in the pillars of the new Africa-Caribbean-Pacific/EU Partnership Agreement** which will replace the Cotonou Agreement; this agreement between the European Union and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) concerns the EU's relations with 79 countries.

→ **Promote, in bilateral trade agreements and the various association and cooperation agreements between the EU and third countries or regional organizations, clauses for the integration of the social economy in national priorities and reforms** in favor of the model. Ensure that provisions regarding the principles of fair trade, solidarity finance, agroecology, gender equality and responsible consumption are applied by the companies and organizations mentioned in these agreements.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

→ **Put the social economy at the heart of the European Commission's policy, especially with regard to its external action**, which includes foreign policy, defense and security, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

→ **Organize an annual event rotating between different geographical areas of the world and highlighting the trajectory of third countries that have made progress in the social economy field**; this aims to share experiences, promote an inter-institutional working approach, and bring together national, regional and international ecosystems such as governments, local and regional authorities, civil society, and funding agencies.

→ **Encourage the emergence of a strategic alliance, the "EU Social Economy Alliance", between all actors involved in the social economy**; this should include Member States, third countries and regional organizations that give real political priority to the social economy and identify it as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

→ **Support the development of regional networks of social economy actors and encourage the development and strengthening of national networks**, a number of which will be mentioned below.

→ **Foster alliances and cooperation between social and solidarity economy organizations in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia** to stimulate the emergence of impact projects, local economic development, training and the exchange of goods, services and knowledges in solidarity.

→ **Support research, training, consulting, and technical assistance for the creation and development of think tanks**; these should have up-to-date information on the reality of geographical areas, impacts and advances in favor of SSE. Mapping the existing social and solidarity economy networks at national, regional and international level would be a focus of this think tanks work.

→ **Analyze the regulatory and economic environment of third countries in different regions of the world and give special attention, and – if requested – provide technical assistance**, to countries that wish to develop or have just adopted social economy laws and strategies; this would have the advantage of sending an encouraging signal to third countries and laying the groundwork for an international social economy community.

→ **Contribute to the promotion of the social economy among legislative authorities and lawmakers to enable them to act on their territories** with full knowledge of the facts and to take up legislative issues with a view to the emergence of social economy laws in their countries.

→ **Recognize and promote the potential of migration and its interest in the social economy as a means of empowering persons in migration situation and refugees. Promote the social economy within the diaspora networks** present in the European Union as a lever for consolidating their integration and sustainable human development in their countries of origin.

2. Third countries with draft framework laws on the social economy: South Africa, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Dominican Republic, Brazil, South Korea.

3. Third countries that have recently passed social economy laws: Canada (2013), Costa Rica (2015, Executive Decree No. 39089), Venezuela (2009), Uruguay (2019), Tunisia (2019), Cameroon (2019), Djibouti (2019), Mexico (2012), Ecuador (2011), Bolivia (2012), Cape Verde (2016).



MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE EUROPEAN UNION COULD ADOPT AN ACTION PLAN ADAPTED TO EACH REGION OF THE WORLD, AS FOLLOWS

■ PROMOTING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION'S NEIGHBORHOOD

→ **Prioritize the promotion of the social economy in the Eastern Neighborhood countries, namely the Western Balkans and Turkey – beneficiaries of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)⁴**, under which “*EU pre-accession funds support democratic and economic reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey*”⁵ – **and in the European Union's neighboring countries** participating in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), especially those in the South⁶, in order to encourage the development of a social economy culture.

→ **Strengthen Euro-Mediterranean ties in the field of social economy and support third countries that have taken the path of social economy in the MENA region and the Balkans** as a key instrument for social and economic reconstruction after the pandemic, in line with the conclusions of the UfM workshop on «*The Social Economy and Post-Pandemic Recovery: Challenges and Prospects*»⁷ organized by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean with the support of Social Economy Europe.

■ PROMOTING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN AFRICA

→ **Support the promotion of the social economy with the African Union**, which brings together the 55 states of the African continent, through a joint seminar on the social economy and cooperation policies.

→ **Initiate and maintain a political rapprochement with regional organizations that have the social economy as their hobbyhorse**, such as the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which adopted a uniform act on cooperative societies on December 15, 2010 and which has jurisdiction over 17 countries in Central and West Africa, or the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which has common regulations for mutuals and a micro-credit activity for non-profit organizations.

→ **Integrate the social economy into programs financed by the European Union in partnership with funding agencies** such as the African Development Bank (ADB), which is financing the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (PD-CVA) in Cameroon, to promote the development of income-generating activities and the creation of decent jobs in the production, processing, conservation and marketing of goods and values.

→ **Support the development of regional networks of SSE actors**, such as the Women and Youth for Social and Solidarity Economy (WYSSE) network and encourage the development and strengthening of national networks.

■ PROMOTING THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

→ **Explore the possibility of joint actions with regional organizations** such as Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) or Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). The latter has two inter-institutional spaces dedicated to the social and solidarity economy: the Specialized Meeting of Mercosur Cooperatives (RECM) and the Specialized Meeting of Family Farming (REAF), which monitor, as their prerogative, the Sustainable Development Goals, but also a Strategic Social Action Program (PEAS) with a social and solidarity focus; the Organization of American States (OAS) is another regional organization interested in the social and solidarity economy.


4. Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey

5. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/leaflets/150928_en_leaflet_ipa2_eco-dev.pdf

6. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia

7. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/fr/ufm-workshop-social-eco/>





→ **Initiate and maintain a political rapprochement with institutions working on the Social and Solidarity Economy** such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) or the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO); a first common work could be the mapping of the state and importance of SSE by country and by region as well as to install a permanent observatory of the evolution of SSE in the region.

→ **Coordinate actions with the Cooperative of the Americas**, which involves cooperative movements, promotes the Social and Solidarity Economy on the continent, and brings together public development, promotion, financing, and supervision organizations as well as the Parliamentary Network from the Americas for the Cooperative Sector.

→ **Document socio-economic and environmental strategies particularly developed in Latin America, exchange know-how and look at new organizational models** such as the movement of factories recovered by their unemployed workers in Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil, barter markets and complementary local currencies, the community economies of the original peoples, solidarity-based economic circuits or the concept of living well in Bolivia and Ecuador.

→ **Integrate the Social and Solidarity Economy into programs financed by the European Union in partnership with regional financing agencies** such as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration in order to promote the development of income-generating activities and the creation of decent jobs in the production, transformation, conservation and marketing of goods and values.

→ **Support the development of regional networks of Social and Solidarity Economy actors**, such as the Network of Latin American Women for the Social and Solidarity Economy (Red de Mujeres Latinoamericanas para la Economía Social y Solidaria), and **encourage the development and strengthening of national networks**.

■ PROMOTING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN NORTH AMERICA

→ **Explore the possibility of joint actions with Canada and in particular with the Quebec region**, one of the world's pioneer regions in terms of social economy, and find points of convergence with the Canadian and Quebec governments' action plan.

→ **Recognize the dynamism of cooperatives and social enterprises in the United States and build alliances with social economy businesses and organizations within the framework of the Transatlantic Economic Dialogue**, which provides a framework for transatlantic cooperation between enterprises, the European Union (EU) and the United States.

■ PROMOTING THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN ASIA

→ **Integrate the Social and Solidarity Economy into the programs financed by the European Union in Asia and document and exchange the socio-economic and environmental strategies developed, the innovative practices and the legal and institutional developments** to make the Social and Solidarity Economy more visible in Asian countries. Integrate the Social and Solidarity Economy into the policy recommendations issued within the framework of the Switch Asia Program, in particular in the field of circular economy, on the model of the synergies identified by the European Commission between these two fields through the Circular Economy Action Plan and the upcoming Social Economy Action Plan, and explore the transfer of knowledge between the two regions in this perspective.

→ **Strengthen partnerships with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as part of its 2030 strategy to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient and sustainable Asia and Pacific, as well as with regional organizations** such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), to mainstream Social and Solidarity Economy into regional development agendas and programs and achieve sustainable reduction of poverty and inequality; this will be achieved through the promotion of income-generating activities for disadvantaged groups such as unemployed youth, women, people with disabilities, etc., both in urban and rural areas and in conflict-affected regions.



→ Include, within the framework of the 13th ASEM Summit and subsequent meetings, the social and solidarity economy and highlight its strategic importance as a means to address many issues that are central to the ASEM agenda, including sustainable development and decent work, in a cross-cutting manner. In particular, the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) can serve as a platform to support the development of national and regional SSE networks to advance sustainable, inclusive and people-centered development.

■ MULTILATERAL BODIES

→ Establish a *memorandum of understanding* and seek areas of collaboration with the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, which in its 1975 Helsinki Final Act emphasizes its willingness “to encourage with the Mediterranean States the development of mutually advantageous cooperation in the various fields of economic activity, particularly through the expansion of trade on the basis of a common awareness of the need to ensure stability and progress, trade relations, their mutual economic interests and their different levels of economic development, thus ensuring their economic progress and welfare”, and which, as such, supports important actions to encourage the development of the social economy, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

2. SUPPORTING THE PROMOTION OF THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY by United Nations agencies, funds and programs

■ UNITED NATIONS INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (UNTFSSSE)

→ Support the work of the **United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy**, particularly initiatives to raise awareness, promote and educate people about the social and solidarity economy, starting from a young age.

■ UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION ON SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

→ Support, in cooperation with EU Member States and in connection with the **United Nations Interagency Task Force (UNTFSSSE)**, the adoption by the **UN General Assembly of a Resolution on the Social and Solidarity Economy**, to stimulate the development of the Social and Solidarity Economy.

■ INTERNATIONAL LEADING GROUP ON THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (ILGSSE)

→ Support the work of the **International Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy (ILGSSE)**, chaired by France and including Ecuador, Costa Rica, Luxembourg, Morocco, Colombia, the Republic of Korea and Uruguay (Quebec and Senegal are observer members), the entire United Nations Interagency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, SSE International Forum, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM), Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF), Global Fund for Cities Development (GFCDD), Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF), Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS).

■ PARTNERSHIPS WITH UN AGENCIES, FUNDS, PROGRAMS THAT WORK ON THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

→ Map existing projects that promote and develop the **Social and Solidarity Economy**, driven by United Nations agencies, funds and programs in the social economy.

→ Co-invest in projects promoting and supporting the **Social and Solidarity Economy implemented by United Nations agencies**, such as the ILO (International Labor Organization), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), UNDP (United Nations Development Program), UN Women, and others.



3. SUPPORTING THE DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION through the Social Economy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030

- **Identify the social economy as one of the instruments for the prevention of violent conflict to address the security challenges facing Europe and its neighborhood, as well as for political and social progress.** Promote the social economy as an essential part of **effective multilateralism** and as a **crucial actor for the achievement of the SDGs**, in particular Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and open societies and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Conduct a study on the link between the social economy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in target countries** (Member States and non-EU countries) through its capacity to include people - inclusion is specified in 23 targets - especially with regard to essential services and the care society, such as the extension of social protection or informality.
- **Participate in periodic review processes and vigilance regarding the implementation of the SDGs** such as the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) or other monitoring mechanisms in the EU Member States and EU network.
- **Encourage third countries to submit voluntary reports on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to include a chapter on the social economy**, as Uruguay did in 2021.
- **Allocate a specific budget for impact assessment to address the lack of visibility and measurement of the impact of enterprises and organizations of the social economy on the SDGs.**

4. IMPLEMENTING A FAIR-TRADE POLICY WHOSE PRINCIPLES are close to those of the Social Economy in order to ensure the transition to responsible value chains

- **The European Union**, which is sensitive to voluntary practices of corporate avoiding to distort competition with the rest of the world, **must use the mechanism of labels to put in place a combination of initiatives:**
 - ▶ A law on duty of care designed to achieve positive impacts for producers and workers in third countries;
 - ▶ Sectoral coalitions (textiles, cocoa, deforestation, etc.) that are binding on social and environmental aspects, particularly in terms of transparency for consumers, but also in terms of the income and living wages of producers and workers;
 - ▶ Bilateral agreements with producer countries (particularly on child labour);
 - ▶ A reworking of free trade agreements on the basis of the true social and environmental costs of products, targets to reduce these negative impacts and measurement;
 - ▶ Public procurement that gives a mandatory and specific place to fair and sustainable products;
 - ▶ The inclusion of Fair Trade principles in the objectives of European economic diplomacy;
 - ▶ The deployment of the EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade Award;
 - ▶ The organization of a European Fair Trade Week;
 - ▶ A dedicated person/team for small producers in the Chief Trade Enforcement Officer.

5. INCLUDING THE PROMOTION OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY in the terms of reference of EU delegations around the world

- **Map and pay particular attention to the development of networks of social economy organizations and enterprises at the regional and national level** through the European Union delegations across the world.
- **Ensure that social economy organizations and enterprises participate in talks between delegations, EU headquarters and traditional private sector enterprises and that the social economy is put on the agenda of EU delegations in third countries** that have undertaken recognition and promotion of the social economy at the local, regional and/or national level.
- **Train, raise awareness of social economy issues, and keep EU delegation staff informed** through technical assistance, cooperation with the EU and local social economy networks.

→ **Provide EU representations across the world with practical instructions concerning the social economy:** promote the social economy in the declarations, consult civil society actors of the social economy in a bottom-up approach in the third country, elaborate strategic documents for the promotion of the social economy, taking into account as a grid the implementation of the SDGs, and regularly assess the developments concerning the social economy.

→ **Promote the creation and development of regional/transnational networks** to cooperate with national networks

6. STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO FINANCING for Social Economy organizations and enterprises

→ **Integrate the social economy into the European Union's financing instruments to support and strengthen access to social economy organizations and enterprises;** these instruments include the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Instrument for Stability and Peace (ISP), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the European Development Fund (EDF) and possibly the European Instrument for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

→ **Create other financing instruments designed to be seed capital or acceleration capital for the projects of organizations and companies of the Social Economy,** with a process of accompaniment for the management of the projects – if necessary – aimed primarily at projects managed by organizations of women, youth, indigenous peoples, or people with other types of socio-economic exclusion, also having as a target innovative, environmentally sustainable and regenerative projects, in the logic of the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

→ **Discuss in cooperation with the OECD, with the regional banks of the different continents, with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank regarding the financing of social economy enterprises and organizations** with the aim of taking into account other socio-economic indicators, for example the creation of quality jobs, the environmental impact or the regenerative ecosystemic impact, as part of the impact measurement activity.

7. PUTTING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY ON THE AGENDA of global forums and conferences

→ **Take a special interest in the debates of the United Nations General Assembly,** which will review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

→ **Integrate the social economy into the COP Climate and COP Biodiversity negotiations.**

→ **Integrate the social economy into the G20 and G7 negotiations.**

8. STRENGTHENING GLOBAL ACTION on the Social Economy, in cooperation with the OECD

→ **Ensure that the Global Action to promote the Social and Solidarity Economy launched in 2021 by the OECD and the European Commission, which will be conducted over the next three years, includes the participation of all stakeholders at the international and regional levels** and contributes to a better knowledge of the social economy ecosystems of the target countries, namely Brazil, Canada, Mexico, India, the United States, in addition to the 27 EU member countries.

→ **Ensure that the International Guide on Legal Frameworks for SSE and the International Guide on Impact Measurement for SSE, the third component of the Global Action to promote the Social Solidarity Economy, are in line with the needs of Social and Solidarity Economy actors.**

We thank you for your attention and we hope that these recommendations will be useful in building the international dimension of the of the European Action Plan for Social Economy.

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