

The bureau of the Social Economy Intergroup meets Commissioner Bieńkowska

On Tuesday 12th of April the bureau of the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup met, for the first time, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Ms. Elżbieta Bieńkowska. The meeting took place at the European Parliament, in Strasbourg, aiming at having an exchange of views on the European Commission's next steps to further acknowledge and promote the social economy.

Jens Nilsson (S&D, SE), thanked the Commissioner for this important first step to maintain a fluent dialogue on the social economy at political level. Mr. Nilsson underlined the need to follow-up the recommendations of the Council Conclusions on "The promotion of the social economy as key driver of economic and social development in Europe", adopted last December. In this way, he stressed: "Now the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament share a common and inclusive understanding of the scope and the diversity of the social economy, we invite the European Commission to join us, to take the advantage of the full potential of social economy enterprises and organisations".

Ramón Luis Valcárcel (EPP, ES), Vice-President of the European Parliament, emphasized his positive experience with the social economy as President of the Region of Murcia (Spain): "Because of its values and focus on the primacy of the person, social economy proved to be a competitive and resilient economic actor, creating and maintaining jobs, even during the worse years of the economic crisis". Vice-President Valcárcel, invited Commissioner Bieńkowska to be ambitious in promoting the whole social economy.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL, FR), stressed that social economy enterprises perfectly interact with other forms of enterprise in the market. However, she pointed out the necessity to acknowledge its specific models, by developing a tailored European legal framework, allowing them to grow and operate cross-border in the Single Market, on equal footing with the other forms of enterprise.

Sven Giegold (GREENS/EFA, DE), started by reminding the importance of the social economy in terms of employment and economic performance: "The social economy should not be limited to social policy, it is a key economic actor. The major efforts to promote the social economy, made during last years, should be pursued. There are few policy areas with such a potential to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth and social cohesion in Europe". Finally, Mr. Giegold stressed the need to develop, within Eurostat, updated statistics on social economy.

Sofia Ribeiro (EPP, PT), pointed out that it would be of key importance to recognise and boost social economy's contribution to high quality jobs creation, and to the work

integration of people at risk of social exclusion, through the upcoming Social Pillar or Pillar of Social Rights. She also invited the Commission to develop a legal framework for the diversity of social economy forms. Finally, Ms. Ribeiro underlined, that the Intergroup, because of its composition -80 MEPs from 6 political groups- shows the strong and wide political support from the Parliament to the social economy.

Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska agreed on the necessity to share -within the different EU institutions- a common and inclusive understanding of the social economy. In this way, she stressed that the term “social economy enterprises”, seems to be the consensual one and therefore it should be used by the different institutions whilst developing its policies. Concerning the following-up of the Council Conclusions, she announced that the social economy will be included into the modernisation of the single market. Moreover, the COSME programme will support the digitalisation of social economy enterprises and the strengthening of the relationships between them and the other forms of enterprises. In regard to the GECES -group of experts on social entrepreneurship- Ms. Bieńkowska confirmed that its report will be presented in October, coinciding with the Slovak Presidency of the Council. Finally, the Commissioner expressed her willing to establish a permanent political dialogue between the Commission and the Social Economy Intergroup in view of developing new initiatives to promote the social economy.

Juan Antonio Pedreño, President of Social Economy Europe, the organisation in charge of the secretariat of the Intergroup, stressed that it was a very successful and fruitful meeting because of the consensus on the comprehensive concept of “social economy enterprises”. A key consensus in order improve the visibility and understanding of the sector. SEE President also highlighted the importance of pursuing the path initiated by this first meeting, by setting-up a permanent dialogue, at political level, between the European Parliament’s Social Economy Intergroup and the European Commission. Mr. Pedreño concluded by inviting the Commissioner and the bureau of the Intergroup to visit some “reference” social economy enterprises and entities.

The European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup: is supported by more than 80 MEPs, from 6 political groups. It is designed to ensure that the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union take into account the social economy and its actors whilst developing and implementing their policies. Moreover, its goals are to promote exchanges of views on EU policies and legislations linked to social economy issue, and to provide regular opportunities for dialogue between MEPs, social economy representatives and experts, European Commission and Member States representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

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