

Bratislava declaration

Social Economy as a key player in providing effective answers to current societal challenges in the EU and the world

Continuing the efforts done by previous Presidencies and in the framework of expert presentations and political statements presented at the Presidency Conference *Social Economy as a key player in providing effective answers to current societal challenges in the EU and the world* held in Bratislava on 30th November and 1st December 2016, the representatives of the governments signed below adopt the present declaration:

WE acknowledge that economic recovery in the European Union is decreasing unemployment but it is unquestionable that disparities in the frame of such development are markedly visible and still there are regions and wide groups of citizens not benefiting from economic growth.

WE express our conviction that more inclusive economy could decrease income and wealth inequalities and contribute to the common European effort to combat social exclusion and thus to return trust of our citizens to the European integration project.

WE welcome the Commission's proposal of the European Pillar of Social Rights and call for active public discussion and hard work on it because the European Union needs strong and real tool to deepen its social dimension.

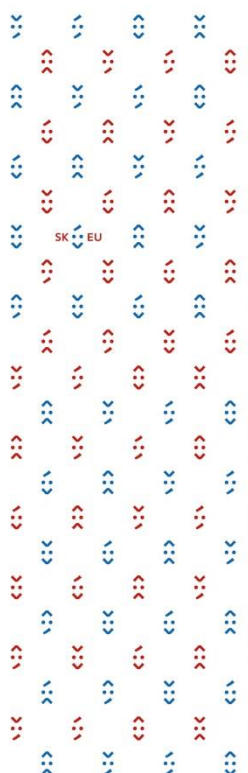
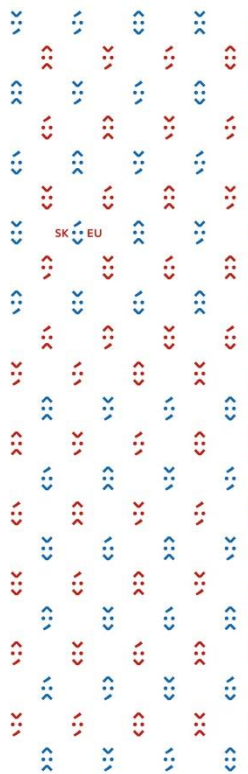
WE therefore stress that social economy can contribute to sustainable job creation and social innovations, but that the Member States and the EU institutions still do not use its full potential.

WE acknowledge the increasing recognition of the importance of the social economy at European and national level but it must be enhanced by broader and more ambitious legislative and financial tools creating proper environment.

Therefore we urgently call for the following actions and decisions:

- Continue to follow the recommendations of the earlier Declarations on the common understanding and support of diversity for the social economy forms; on the creation of a genuine single market for social economy; on general support in the EU programmes, projects and funds; and on the development of an adequate financial ecosystem for social economy;
- In the light of these points, the European institutions – above all the Commission and the Parliament – should make carefully study the Council conclusions on “the promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe” adopted by the European Council on 7 December 2015 and the GECES General Report 2016 “Social enterprises and the social economy going forward” and use its recommendations in their upcoming decisions in every field which can be interconnected with the social economy;





- The European Commission's Social Business Initiative should be reinforced and updated by the new European Action Plan for Social Economy to be set up in 2017 in co-ordination with the National and European representative organizations and the GECES recommendations, profiting from the opportunity of "Initiative for start-up and scale up" communication adopted in November, 2016. Such an Action Plan should be permanently integrated in the Commission Work Programme.
- The European Commission should ensure a sustained and continuing dialogue between the Directorates for Employment, for Growth, and for Regional Development, at the political as well as technical level, in order to make sure that the framework for the financial instruments using the ESIF funds properly takes into account the specific character and needs of social economy;
- Regular high-level meetings of high political representatives in charge of social economy in all European Union Member States must be promoted in order to lay the foundations of enhanced cooperation.

Signed on 1st December 2016 in Bratislava.

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