



To: President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker  
cc: First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans  
cc: Vice-President Vladis Dombrovskis  
cc: Vice-President Jyrki Katainen  
cc: Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska  
cc: Commissioner Marianne Thyssen

**Brussels, Wednesday 12th October 2016,**

Dear President Jean-Claude Juncker,

We are writing as MEPs and Co-Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup, to request you to incorporate into the Commission Work Programme 2017, a **European Action Plan for the social economy**.

The European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup is supported by more than 80 MEPs, from 6 political groups. The Intergroup provides regular opportunities for dialogue between MEPs, European Commission and Member States representatives, social economy representatives, EESC members and other relevant stakeholders, on EU policies and legislations linked to the social economy.

The social economy is a **major socio-economic player** in the European Union. There are more than **2 million** social economy enterprises (i.e. 10% of all EU businesses), that employ over **14.5 million** people. All social economy enterprises, ranging from SMEs to large companies, have common characteristics defining a virtuous business model:

- The primacy of people and the social objective over capital.
- Democratic governance.
- Reinvestment of most of their profits to ensure the long-term sustainability of the enterprise, or to provide services to its members or to the communities in which they operate.

The contribution of the social economy to the achievement of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, high-quality jobs creation, social innovation and cohesion, local and regional development and environmental protection, has been consistently acknowledged by EU and international institutions. On December 2015, the Council of the European Union adopted Council conclusions on “**The promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe**”. The text provides concrete policy recommendations to the European Commission and to Member States to unlock the full potential of the social economy for EU sustainable growth. We kindly ask you to develop effective solutions to the issues faced by social economy enterprises at EU-level:

- **Need to foster the visibility and recognition of the social economy.** The social economy should be mainstreamed into the main EU socio-economic policies, its effective contribution to the major macro-economic aggregates should be documented by Eurostat, the European Commission could give guidance to the growing number of Member States and public authorities willing to develop policies to promote the social economy.

- **Overcome legal barriers.** Social economy enterprises and organisations face administrative and legal difficulties in Europe when they wish to operate cross-border, particularly in countries where the creation or operation of certain social economy actors is not envisaged or restricted to certain activities. The lack of legal recognition for all social economy actors in EU legislation means that most EU policies are not designed taking into account the social economy. The European Commission should find innovative ways to integrate the social economy into EU legislation and to establish a level playing field that provides all social economy actors with opportunities equivalent to those available to other forms of enterprises. In line with the Public Procurement Directive, the European Commission should give guidance to Member States and other public authorities to include social and environmental considerations in public procurement procedures, in order to maximise their social and economic impact.
- **Improve access to financing and funding.** The European Commission shall contribute to the development of an adequate financial eco-system for the social economy. On the one hand, by supporting and better recognising within EU financial regulations -such as the CMU- social and environmental investment and social economy financial actors such as cooperative and ethical banks and financiers, and cooperative and mutual insurers. On the other hand, by further making active use of EU funds and financial instruments, such as EFSI, EaSI, ESIF and Horizon 2020; to boost investment in social economy enterprises and organisations.

Mr. Juncker, the social economy should play a key role in building a future of prosperity for all Europeans. The European Commission should seize the opportunity and strengthen its efforts to promote the social economy in Europe by including a European Action Plan for the social economy among its priorities for 2017.

Yours sincerely,

**Jens Nilsson** (S&D, SE), Co-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Ramón Luis Valcárcel** (EPP, ES), Co-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Beatriz Becerra** (ALDE, ES), Co-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Marie-Christine Vergiat** (GUE/NGL, FR), Co-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Sven Giegold** (GREENS/EFA, DE), Co-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Sofia Ribeiro** (EPP, PT), Vice-President of the Social Economy Intergroup

**Elena Gentile** (S&D, IT), Vice-President of the Social Economy Intergroup