

Dear GECES Secretariat,

The recent news regarding the abolition of the unit dedicated to the social economy within DG GROW — leaving DG EMPL solely responsible for these activities — has come as a surprise to many GECES members.

Over the past years, the European Commission's approach to the social economy has evolved significantly, thanks in part to the fruitful dialogue between diverse stakeholders and perspectives. Within GECES, we have come to appreciate the value of viewing the social economy through multiple lenses: not only through labour and social policy, but also through entrepreneurial aspect, industrial strategy and the broader transitions it entails. This holistic perspective reflects a recognition of the social economy as an ecosystem per se, one that intersects various policy domains and embraces enterprises active in different industrial sectors, such as energy renewables, health, textile, construction, tourism etc.

It is no coincidence that one of the key recommendations emerging from the GECES co-programming exercise during our first meeting last October by experts involved was the call to involve a broader range of DGs in our work, to further strengthen and complement the co-chairing of the GECES by DG EMPL and DG GROW.

The decision to discontinue the Social Economy Unit in DG GROW — a unit that played a relevant role in the GECES and in the progress made in recent years — is therefore concerning. GECES was informed of this structural change only after it occurred, without prior consultation or explanation. While we understand that internal reorganisations fall outside GECES's remit, such decisions inevitably influence the framework in which we operate.

We strongly believe in preserving the valuable work carried out so far with commitment and vision. We therefore urge that the new organisational structure continues to fully implement the key initiatives outlined in the EU Social Economy Action Plan, the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions and the Transition Pathway. These initiatives span a wide array of policy areas that go well beyond the mandate of DG EMPL. More importantly, they promote a vision of the social economy not as a niche sector, but as a strategic lever for sustainable and inclusive economic development, grounded in the principles of solidarity, fairness, democratic participation and cooperation — principles that are essential to Europe's future, especially in the current international climate.

Social economy entities have repeatedly proven their resilience in times of crisis, their sustainability as community-rooted economic actors, and their critical role in fostering territorial preparedness. In today's shifting geopolitical and environmental landscape, they stand as vital contributors to Europe's preparedness and autonomy.

The social economy embodies the core values that the EU does not give up defending and this vision requires a cross-cutting institutional support. As an actor in the production of goods and services rooted in territories, the social economy is a vector of prosperity, an element of strategic autonomy, and a resource for democratic engagement. During a time in which democracy, inclusion and equality are being rolled back around the globe, it is paramount to promote an economy that fosters these cornerstones of an equitable future.

Representatives of Member States, civil society actors and observers in GECES attest, quantitatively and qualitatively, to its dynamic role in the local economy, at the heart of

entrepreneurship strategies in areas such as labour inclusion, social affairs, health protection, ecological and digital transitions.

With this letter, we express our hope that the social economy will continue to be recognised and supported for its vital contribution to Europe's economic and social progress — not as the responsibility of a single Directorate-General, but as a shared mission. As GECES experts, we reaffirm our commitment — also on behalf of our respective organisations — to continue to pursue the objective of making the social economy a pillar of the European development strategy.

We therefore call on the Commission to ensure that the social economy remains a priority, supported by the necessary expertise, visibility, and organisational resources it requires. As it is a complex and multifaceted reality — one that brings together entrepreneurial spirit and social values - we consider it appropriate that a reference on social economy issues (e.g. on topics such as public procurement) is also maintained in DG Grow.

We remain convinced that there is still much to be done. And we would be pleased to affirm this conviction in a meeting with the Commissioner in charge of the social economy.

Let this reorganisation be an opportunity not for retreat, but for renewed momentum — building on the demonstrated contributions of the social economy to Europe's resilience, sustainability, and preparedness. We look forward to continuing our common work for Europe to prosper.

Yours sincerely,

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