

The Social Economy Intergroup and the European Commission agree on continuing building an ambitious EU policy for the social economy



Left-to-right: Jens Nilsson, Jyrki Katainen, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Sven Giegold, Sofia Ribeiro and Juan Antonio Pedreño

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On Tuesday 24 October 2017, the bureau of the **European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup** (SEIG) met in Strasbourg with the European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, **Jyrki Katainen**, and with Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, **Marianne Thyssen**.

Jens Nilsson MEP (S&D, SE), Co-President of the SEIG, thanked Vice-President Katainen and Commissioner Thyssen for their willingness to “*define together the milestones of an ambitious EU policy for the social economy*”. Moreover, he acknowledged the importance of the work being done by the Commission to support the growth of the social economy, such as the organisation of the [European Conference on Social Economy and the Future of Work](#), that will take place next 16 November in Goteborg, in the framework of the European Social Summit. Nilsson stressed the importance of continuing cooperating to ensure that social economy becomes a structural policy of the EU: “*we should convey a legacy to the next EU Commission and Parliament*”.

Vice-President **Jyrki Katainen** recalled that the [Start-up and Scale-up Initiative](#), launched in 2016, has been materialized in a [series of actions for the social economy](#) structured in 5 pillars: access to funding, access to markets, improving framework conditions, social and technological innovation and international dimension. He

highlighted, as a key action, the use of a contribution of the *Juncker Plan* (European Fund for Strategic Investments) to invest in social economy projects.

Commissioner **Marianne Thyssen** stressed that, given its economic and social weight (i.e. 2 million enterprises, 14.5 million employees and 8% of the EU' GDP), social economy will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, that will be proclaimed next 17 November. In addition, she emphasised the importance of the **European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation** (EaSI) to increase access to finance for social enterprises.

Sofia Ribeiro MEP (EPP, PT), Vice-President of the SEIG, brought-up the need of setting-up EU legal frameworks for all social economy actors: *“we need to guarantee that all social economy actors can benefit from the Single Market and operate on equal footing with other types of enterprise”*.

Marie-Christine Vergiat MEP (GUE/NGL, FR), Co-President of the SEIG, underlined the importance of developing a clear definition at EU-level of social economy, respecting its diversity and outlining the common features and principles uniting all its actors. Vergiat stressed that such a definition is a condition for the design of effective policies.

Sven Giegold MEP (GREENS/EFA, DE), Co-President of the SEIG, called on the Commission to issue a communication with an Action Plan for the Social Economy during the current mandate, giving visibility and bringing together the different actions to support the growth of these business-models.

Social Economy Europe's President, **Juan Antonio Pedreño**, agreed on the importance of moving forward towards a holistic and ambitious **European Action Plan for the Social Economy**. He recalled that the social economy laws of Spain, Portugal and France converge in establishing the common principles and features to all social economy actors. Moreover, SEE President stressed that: *“an increasing number of Member States are engaging with the social economy, EU Institutions should support their efforts to take full advantage from the potential of these business models for the economic and social development of Europe”*.

Jens Nilsson, concluded the meeting by proposing the elaboration of a SEIG' working paper on the next steps towards an ambitious EU policy for the social economy. Vice-President Katainen and Commissioner Thyssen welcomed this proposal.

SEE is the voice of social economy enterprises and organisations in Europe. Its members are the European organisations of mutual insurers and insurance cooperatives, health mutuals, foundations, paritarian institutions, associations of general interest, work integration social enterprises, ethical and alternative banks and financiers and cities and regions for the social economy. At national level, SEE members are the social economy umbrella organisations of Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup is supported by more than **80 MEPs**, from 6 political groups. SEE is responsible for the secretariat of the SEIG.

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