

SEEDING

Social Economy Enterprises addressing
Digitalisation, Industrial Relations and the European Pillar of Social Rights

Fourth transnational online workshop

Wednesday 17 March 2021 (10:30-12:20 CET)

Zoom meeting

NOTES

The fourth of the six online transnational events in the [Seeding project](#) took place on the 17th of March 2021 on Zoom. This event was focusing on Slovenia and Poland. 35 people had registered and around 20 people attended the online meeting, mostly but not exclusively from social economy enterprises from Poland. The event was moderated by Melinda Kelemen (project manager of the Seeding project)

Luca Pastorelli (executive president, DIESIS Network) welcomed the audience and said a few words about the European level developments regarding social economy, such as the ongoing open consultation on the [EU Action Plan for Social Economy](#), as important part of implementing the principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

Mr. Pastorelli emphasized how significant development it is. DIESIS Network together with Euricse and with the support of Social Economy Europe drafted a [position paper](#) and stakeholders such as ETUC, Social Platform, Social Economy Europe and CECOP/CICOPA Europe formed [an alliance](#) to support the action plan.

Regarding EU events, the next influential [conference on social economy](#) from the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union will be held on 29th of March, 2021.

Melinda Kelemen (project manager, DIESIS Network) gave an overview of the Seeding project activities. The project has been ongoing already two years, therefore most of the project activities and outcomes are available on the project website: the [Background Report](#), [21 case studies](#) and detailed information on the [previous events](#), including recap videos. There will be two further transnational events until May, then a

final conference during the summer. The project partners also organize local workshops in Slovenia, Poland, Italy, Spain, France, Ireland and Germany. Also, a case study report will be published in the upcoming weeks and a policy recommendation before the final conference.

Feliciano Iudicone (researcher, FGB), on behalf of the research partner FGB, first gave a summary of the Background report and provided an insight of the upcoming Case Study Report. According to the findings of the Background Report, the challenges posed by digitalization are sometimes greater than the opportunities, especially in case of the Small and Medium Enterprises.

There is a general risk that occupations will be automatized. As the findings show, especially literature reviewed for Poland and Ireland, there is a risk of job polarization, with possible gains for employment in creative jobs and in the care sector. Yet, the rise of platform work may lead to more precarious conditions in the very same sectors. When it comes to working conditions, the main issues are mainly linked to privacy issues, data management and excessive monitoring of employees. Teleworking also brings the problem of having blurry boundaries between work and private life.

Regarding the case study report, since the case studies have been written and published, the Covid overwrote a few things on the field of digitalization but there is still a serious gap between highly technical and innovative huge companies like Google and small and medium size companies where lack of digital skills and access to costly programs and tools is a very present problem. As one of the examples, dominant platforms these days founded their business on outsourcing tasks to self-employed workers and minimize their risks this way. In the Seeding project there are five cooperative platforms. Those also use outsourcing model and self-employment contracts, but it is interesting how these platforms deal with the same risks in a different way. Mr. Iudicone in his presentation went into more details. The presentation was followed by a lively Q+A session.

The next topic was Slovenia.

Sebastian Piki (ASES) has started with a few facts about Association Social Economy Slovenia, that was founded in 2011, in the same year when the law on social economy entrepreneurship was introduced in the country. With the present name in 2018 it became an umbrella non-government organization for social economy and its main tasks include promotion and support and developing of social Enterprises in Slovenia. Switching to digitalization, Mr. Piki stated that digitalization is not really happening in the social economy sector in Slovenia. The social economy players would need financial aid in order to be successful in this area, but they greatly depend on public funds.

He also explained that social economy enterprises especially the ones with activity selling and buying on markets needs some promotion (not only in Slovenia but in south-east Europe as well). These enterprises are not recognized as specific actors creating impact and its lack of visibility and lack of sales channels makes their situation even more difficult. To help this case, ASES set up a digital platform to promote these companies and provide new sales channels. The effectiveness of this multiplier channel is still to be tested. ASES also have another project, an European based school for social economy to overcome of the lack of business knowledge.

A Slovenian case study (not amongst the 21 of case studies of Seeding) was presented by **Tina Arnus** from [Pupillam](#). Pupillam is a zero – waste food shop in Maribor, mainly selling ecological products and local food, established. The shop by now have online store as well, but since people like to go to the shop and to see and feel the products, they have opened a store in 2019. The Covid situation brought the question of home delivery as well, but not using a common provider but build a won delivery service takes time. The company is regularly active on social media and - since the only store of its kind in the area – other media channels invite them often as well to present their activity.

After Slovenia, Poland got in focus.

Lukasz Komuda (FISE) gave a broad overview on the Polish labour market developments. Since social economy sector is small in Poland, the data was mainly referred to the whole economic sector in Poland. Before the Covid, the unemployment rate was the lowest of the previous 30 years, and then with the Covid – imposed crisis, the numbers went up but still are very good. (The numbers also depend on the methodology used and it is difficult to provide a reliable number for various reasons). The problem is that there is a lot of hidden problems behind the numbers and social economy is not an exception. The problems mentioned are layoffs and hidden employment, civil law contracts instead of labour law, self-employed people, or shorter working time of people on regular employment. Looking at sector of activity, there are winners (like IT and scientific activities) and losers (like agriculture) but the winner's group is much smaller. The social economy sector is too small to be analysed, but care sector is amongst the losers what is also a significant activity of social economy enterprises. The government introduced financial support early when the crisis started but it proved to be not so sufficient.

Regarding digitalization, since the social economy sector is characterized with small entities in the country those are normally not able to invest new technology. Regarding industrial relations, social economy sector and trade unions are not typically cooperating in the country.

The last speaker was **Tina Baĳ** from [CoopTechHub](#) (not amongst the 21 of case studies of Seeding). The Warsaw based initiative is unique in Poland. It has just been started so Ms. **Baĳ** rather talked about future plans than history. CoopTechHub is part of a bigger multistakeholder cooperative and was established a week earlier. The cooperative gather people from different sectors with business background aim to do something good for the local community but profitable at the same time. The idea was inspired by platform corporativism. Since big data and companies are taking over many areas of live, the people at CoopTechHub want to support and build resilient local economy by applying cooperative values and using technology. CoopTechHub have already a mobile app and aim to use the tools it has to support local business and local authorities to create cooperation. The mobile app is the main product so far that is reachable for companies

who would not be able to have access such technologies. For example, online marketplace booking system and its content management. These systems are originally created by huge organizations like Uber. Amongst the future plans, there is an app that provide networking opportunities or travel is on its agenda as well (CoopTechHub is a partner for Fairbnb). The initiative focuses on social innovation in general.

As a conclusion, Melinda Kelemen gave a short summary of the event. The next events are foreseen on 14th of April (focusing on Ireland, France and Germany) and 19th of May (focusing on Italy and Spain).

17th of March 2021