

SEEDING

Social Economy Enterprises addressing

Digitalisation, Industrial Relations and the European Pillar of Social Rights

Eu-level policy event

Thursday 8th of July 2021 (10:00-12:00 CET)

Zoom meeting

NOTES

After a series of online European workshops, the last transnational event before the final conference was organized on the 8th of July, 2021 on Zoom targeting EU-level decisionmakers, experts and project partners. Over 20 people attended the online meeting, from more than 10 countries. The event was moderated by Melinda Kelemen (project manager of the Seeding project).

Luca Pastorelli (executive president, Diesis Network) welcomed the audience and explained that the aim of the EU policy event was to update, collect and share ideas about digitalisation and social economy in the EU level policy context to be able to form more targeted policy recommendations on the topic. Mr. Pastorelli highlighted the fact that during the Seeding project valuable information was collected from many countries through research.

Melinda Kelemen (project manager, Diesis Network) as usual at all previous events, gave an overview on the completed project activities. The outcomes are all available on the project [website](#): the Case Study Report, Background Report, 21 case studies, and detailed information on the previous events, including recap videos. A final publication - Policy Guidelines - will be available by September and the project final conference will probably take place on the 21th September 2021.

Feliciano Iudicone (researcher, FGB) first started with a few outcomes of the research done within the framework of the project. As explained in the background report, digitalization brings opportunities and risks as well. One of the main findings was that digitalization can rise the risk of job polarisation and job losses due to high automatization in some occupations. Monitoring via digital tools also bring privacy issues. On the other hand, many research findings flag risks of digital divide, many workers and entrepreneurs still lacking basic digital skills.

Finally, platforms can lead to precarization of workers in some areas and come with issues like abuse of self-employment contracts, while triggering competition among (self-employed) workers, also by means of rating and ranking systems.

Based on these findings, it would be recommended to support workers' involvement in decision making processes, especially when it comes to digital innovation and maximizing digital tools in the decision-making process as well. The adoption of minimum rates of pay for self-employed would also be an important step to improve working conditions in platforms and among other companies widely using self-employment contracts to avail of the possibility to bypass costs associated with employment contracts, while restoring conditions for a fair competition. Other policy recommendations were to develop publicly accessible innovation centres, and to guarantee access to finance for innovative projects. Mr. Iudicone brought in case studies [Suara](#), [Panato](#), [appTaxi](#), [4freelancers](#), [Som Mobilitat](#), [WeCreate](#) as good examples for the above drafted policy recommendations.

Samuel Brülisauer (Research analyst, UNRISD) provided information about the [working paper](#) on digital social economy published by Ciriec and Diesis Network together in 2020. The working paper covers issues such as definitions of digital social economy, applications of social economy (work and income, goods and services, money and finance, state and governance) as well as steps towards a digital social economy ecosystem. The definition of social economy includes technical environment, socioeconomic innovations and transformations social economy traditions. Mr. Brülisauer also talked about platform cooperatives in traditional sectors and in the context of new jobs (e.g.: content creators). He mentioned that non-work income sources are changed with platforms as well as diminished social security of platform workers.

Talking about digital social economy, he stressed that access to money and finance is crucial. Towards a truly digital social economy it's a challenge to cope with the strong network effect (competition) and work together in a cooperative manner.

Karel Vanderpoorten (Policy officer, DG Grow, European Commission) started his contribution with the statement that there were significant developments regarding policy on digitalisation and social economy on European level since the Seeding project started more than two years ago. In addition to the [Social Economy Action Plan](#), he stressed there is a more generic approach that has a link to SE as well on European level. Facts show that unlikely to the big companies, micro-sized and small-sized companies use IT tools and AI or big data to a less much extend. Mr. Vanderpoorten gave some details on updating of the 2020 [EU Industrial Strategy](#). In the strategy social economy is recognized as one of the most important ecosystems. The ecosystem approach of the strategy aims to help the green transition, economic recovery and connected to the social economy action plan. Mr. Vanderpoorten also talked about the open consultation of the forthcoming [Big Data Act](#). As he said, it was relevant for social economy as well in terms e.g., of common data, open platforms as well and legal protection of databases. Another actions he mentioned are the [EU Observatory on Online Platform Economy](#) and the [Innovation Marketplace](#).

Miia Rossi-Gray (Unit Job Creation, DG Employment, European Commission) she started with the statement that regarding social economy as a whole DG Employment and DG Grow work closely together. About the [Social Economy Action Plan](#): the [former steps](#) were the Social Business Initiative (2011) and Start-up and Scale-up Initiative (2016). Ms. Rossi-Gray explained the consultancy process and the [roadmap](#) that finally will lead to the Action Plan.

The main findings of a recent SBI [study](#) that visibility of social economy has been grown recently a lot, many member states implemented actions to support social economy and some feedbacks came about countries with less experience with the sector. The ecosystem approach seems to be a right one. It also become clear that the social economy is fragmented in terms of digitalisation. That is why Seeding is an important

project. Ms. Rossi-Gray also emphasized the importance of the platform economy and platform cooperatives. The idea is to balance working conditions and maintaining sustainability.

Ms. Nena Dokuzov (Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology) started with an announcement about a digital social innovation conference that will take place between 11-15 October 2021 in Slovenia. Ms. Dokuzov explained that in Slovenia, it is important element to implement social innovation into social economy projects and to empower social economy actors to cope with the challenges posed by digitalisation. [Digital Social Innovation Hub](#) was created to help social economy enterprises to access to market and it is part of the local ecosystem. Other activities are also introduced in the country that help social economy enterprises to improve e.g.: digital skills. She mentioned the importance blockchains, trustworthiness, democratization of decision-making processes, platform economies as well. Raise awareness and knowledge about social economy is also part of the aims. The Social Economy Action Plan is highly welcome in Slovenia.

In the final interactive part topics like [minimum wage](#) / living wage in social economy vs. supporting creation of new enterprises (start-ups cannot fulfil requirements of minimum wage at early stage), the [platform work initiative](#), differences between social economy and “regular” companies in terms of digitalisation, interoperability of creative digital tools in the social economy space (e.g. in the tourism sector apart from [fairbnb](#) less source and knowledge is available than in the food sector see [Open Food Network](#)) were discussed.

To conclude, **Melinda Kelemen** and **Luca Pastorelli** gave a short summary of the event and thanked all speakers and participants for joining. The final project event will take place in September 2021.

30th of July 2021.