

A framework law for the Québec social economy

October 10th 2013, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a Law on the Social Economy, which recognizes and regulates the social economy in Québec and sets up a permanent dialogue space with the government in order to facilitate the development of new public policies.

ACTORS INVOLVED

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Regions and the Occupation of Territories (MAMROT), responsible for drafting the law, conducted a consultation with its partners in civil society and other ministries, as is habitual in such processes.

The Committee on Planning and the Public Domain, officially in charge of the consultation process following the filing of the bill, collected the briefs submitted by stakeholders and held hearings during the month of May 2013. Almost 40 submissions were received, 20 groups addressed the Committee and only one dissenting opinion was recorded, that of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce.

Regional Poles of the Social Economy participated in the drafting of briefs, advocacy work, consultation processes and Committee hearings up until the adoption of the law.

The Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Québec Council of Cooperation and Mutuality, the two civil society interlocutors recognized under the law, actively participated in the process surrounding the drafting of the law and the mobilization in support of it.

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED

In the wake of preparations to depose the bill on the social economy, the Chantier de l'économie sociale mobilized its board of directors, which includes sectoral and territorial networks as well as other social movements close to the social economy, and created an ad hoc committee (researchers, partners) to discuss the important issues to be addressed by the law and gather its members' views.

The filing of the bill took place March 19, 2013; the briefs were received during the month of April and stakeholder networks were consulted by the Commission during the month of May. The adoption of the principle by the National Assembly took place June 6 and the detailed study (amendment period) of the bill by the Commission followed (June to October). The law was passed unanimously by the National Assembly on October 10.

Significant mobilization took place in parallel to this legislative process:

- Regional and sectoral networks mobilized in order to signal the existence of this bill to local MPs and to underscore its importance;
- Information sessions were organized to discuss the law and present its structural potential; civil society actors from across the province participated in person and remotely;
- A media campaign supported mobilization efforts;
- The Chantier followed the legislative process closely and was present the four days when the Commission proceeded to study the bill.

The recognition of the social economy as an important component of the Québec economy, alongside the private and public sector, is grounds for hope.

OBJECTIVES

The three main objectives of the law are:

- 1) to promote the social economy as a lever for socioeconomic development;
- 2) to support the development of the social economy by creating and adapting policy tools with a view to fostering coherence in government action and transparency; and
- 3) to facilitate access, for social economy enterprises, to the Administration's measures and programs.

IMPACT

- Fully recognizes the contribution of the social economy in the socio-economic development of Québec;
- Endorses a broad and inclusive definition of the social economy, and the principles defined in 1996. In so doing it takes into account co-operatives, mutuals and non-profit organizations;
- Recognizes the Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Québec Council of Cooperation and Mutuality as the two main civil society interlocutors of government on matters regarding the social economy. The role of sectoral and regional actors as well as support organizations is equally underscored;
- Clarifies the role and responsibilities of MAMROT in matters of development and promotion so that policies and programs are accessible to social economy enterprises;
- Endorses the process of co-construction of policies and measures for the social economy and establishes a consulting committee appointed by the Minister (number and composition of members to be defined) to advise him/her. MPs noted during the discussions of the bill that the objective for this committee is for it to be functional and representative, and that it may integrate researchers, sectoral representatives, and/or other actors as need be. The Minister and this committee will agree together upon its overall mandate and the frequency of consultation.
- Establishes the government's desire to encourage the development of the social economy (increase procurement; improve access to markets and to financing for enterprises, etc.) and enshrines the need for a government action plan including provisions for monitoring and accountability.

NEXT STEP (2013-2014)

Joint development of an action plan for the social economy to achieve the main objectives of the law.

AUTHORS—COLLABORATORS—SOURCES

Centre RELIESS

To learn more about framework laws for the SSE, consult the « Framework Laws » section of the RELIESS: <http://reliess.org/framework-law/?lang=en>

French-language proceedings of information sessions available at: www.chantier.qc.ca

