

# **SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: A DRIVING FORCE TOWARDS GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITIONS**

May, 2022

This contribution is the result of the collaborative work within different European and French networks specialised in ecological and digital transitions that all belong to social and solidarity economy.

It has been compiled from all the exchanges that were possible within ten different conferences dealing with social and solidarity economy and transitions during the European summit of social economy organised in Strasbourg on May 5th-6th, 2022.


The contribution includes several concrete proposals that aim to influence European policies in favour of social and solidarity economy initiatives working towards the ecological and digital transitions.

## **Towards an ecological and solidarity transition**

Achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, as stated within the European Green Deal, is a great challenge for Europe. It is an important a means of improving European citizens' wellbeing by fostering economic models that will be more respectful for biodiversity and climate, decrease the pressure on primary resources, reduce pollution and waste production, be motivated by solidarity, and that will foster the creation of local jobs and services that meet the specific needs of each territory.

The realisation of the Green Transition will not be feasible as long as the sole indicator for evaluating the performance is that of the monetary value, of any given sector, as this leads to a model based on the personal accumulation of wealth and a society of excesses: over-production, over-consumption, etc. It is more urgent than ever to introduce and generalise principles of sobriety, as these are the only way to build a society that will have fewer negative impacts on our environment and on all of humanity.

Social and solidarity economy is based on cooperation, solidarity, the creation of collective rather than individual wealth, care for nature and biodiversity, and local inclusion, as well as the best interests of humanity. It has already demonstrated that it is completely possible to reconcile environmental respect, social utility, and economic activities. In fact, social and solidarity economy has been a real pioneer in different economic sectors of the ecological transition within territories: sustainable agriculture and food systems, reuse and circular economy, energy transition, sustainable mobility, environmental education...



This is why it is urgent to implement a legal framework and economic measures that will encourage environmentally respectful initiatives, and penalise initiatives that would not be environmentally friendly: facilitate access to public procurement, implement favourable fiscal measures, etc. All these measures will have to address the specificity of social and solidarity economy as a whole.

### **Proposal 1: Design adapted legal and financial mechanisms for social and solidarity economy organisations working towards the ecological transition**

The ecological transition seems not to have found a suitable economic model yet, as civil society has been searching for responses to the climate and biodiversity crisis for more than five decades without having achieved major concrete change within the traditional industrial system.


If we want to address large-scale solutions to achieve the green transition in Europe, it will be necessary to allocate consequent financial resources to environmentally friendly initiatives. Many such initiatives are in fact led by civil society groups who want to act to implement concrete responses to climate change. In most cases, these initiatives are organised through social and solidarity organisations. In fact, social and solidarity economy principles such as shared governance and non-profit or limited pursuit of profit models are very appropriate for responding to green transition issues.

In order to continue and scale out and disseminate their actions, social and solidarity structures need to access dedicated and adapted financial mechanisms. Furthermore, social and solidarity organisations that work on environmentally friendly activities often act to raise people's awareness about climate change and biodiversity loss, and try to accompany people in changing their consumption habits. Those activities are not necessarily part of the economic model, but they are dedicated to the common good. They should therefore be funded through dedicated financial measures.

#### **What we are calling for:**

**1 • Implement binding European regulations that favour environmentally friendly initiatives and penalize organisations that fail to respect the environment and nature.**

**2 • Ensure a true level playing field between social and solidarity organisations and mainstream businesses in Europe.** This means a legal framework that recognizes all forms of social and solidarity economy across Member States, and takes their size, sector (including industrial sectors), those operating in remote and rural areas and those run by and including marginalized people (gender, youth, migrant workers and refugees, people of color...) fully into account. This lack of level-playing field needs to be addressed through




a comprehensive set of initiatives that cover funding, capacity-building, skills, taxation, sustainable public procurement, as well as public-private partnerships.

**3 • Facilitate and extend Member States capacity to finance social and solidarity economy initiatives engaged in favour of the ecological transition.** Social and solidarity economy statutes constrain entities to respect specific rules in terms of remuneration: the non-profit organisations have no share to remunerate, and the limited pursuit of profit enterprises must respect specific rules in terms of payment of dividends. These social and solidarity economy organisations differ from traditional enterprises whose main purpose is paying dividends whereby their investment decisions are made according to criteria of profitability such as the internal rate of return or the net present value. Thus, it seems normal that such enterprises must be concerned by the State Aid Regulations. However, for social and solidarity economy organisations, it is necessary that all the Community legislation propose a regulation in terms of State aid that is adapted to the pursuit of their specific environmentally friendly aims in a coherent, joint and systematic manner, including a distinction between non-market-based activities that should not be concerned with the application of the rules of competition AND for the other structures who are part of the economic field. These measures would allow Member States, Provinces and Local Authorities' capacities to properly finance social and solidarity economy initiatives engaged in an ecological transition. This could be done in the continuity of the Communication (2016/C 262/01 - §2.6) of the European Commission, that allows some non-profit organisations to be considered as non-economic activities, and thus exempted from State Aid Regulations.

**4 • Ensure better access to finance for social and solidarity economy organisations.** Social and solidarity organisations are confronted by reluctant private investors who lack knowledge of their business/governance models and risk profile. They also face difficulties to access public funding, as public procurement is usually not adapted to their governance structure (requirements do not currently include governance criteria).

**5 • Make public procurement exemplary by implementing environmental and social clauses that can favour social and solidarity organisations.** European public procurement law was designed to ensure equal treatment between economic operators through the prism of competition law. By trying too hard to make non-discrimination in the selection of tender bids perfect, it has lost its meaning in the very application of the objectives of sustainable development. The legal orthodoxy of purchasing does not necessarily sit well with ecology and solidarity. One of the key points would be to adjust the sacrosanct link with the subject matter of the contract (Directive 2014/24, article 67), which prevents such practise as the CSR policy of a bidder from being considered or which greatly limits the possibilities of social considerations for the award of a public order. There should also be specific clauses that favour the collective bids of local social and solidarity economy structures.




**6 • Increase visibility of social and solidarity economy in EU policy-design and by the wider public.** EU policymakers need to recognize the resilience of social and solidarity economy organisations as key economic actors for the economic recovery and the twin transition and to promote this economic model among the youth and in the education sector.

### **Proposal 2: For a sustainable and quality agriculture that addresses the right to healthy, nutritious food for all, and territorial food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty**

The European Green Deal must support a sustainable and resilient food system, ensuring the right to healthy nutritious food for all, and be based on a system of production that addresses the real needs of both people and planet. This more sustainable system, based mainly on agroecology and organic agriculture (including Participatory Guarantee Systems), should constitute the basis of European agricultural models and contribute to our food self-sufficiency. It is also a proven means to improve both the quality of our food and our collective health, whilst providing better protection for biodiversity and the quality of our soils.

Urgent and coherent actions are needed to address climate change and overcome the unsustainable models of production and consumption which today are the biggest threats to farmers' livelihoods and to EU citizens' long-term food security. All EU policies must support the shift towards fair and sustainable value chains and be coherent with the commitments made in the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. The [FAO 10 Elements of Agroecology](#), adopted by the FAO Council in 2019 should form a core part of this proposed legislation. There should be no support for the watering down or the delay of the existing EU sustainability agenda. The effective and responsible actions of today will ensure that Europe is well-placed to face tomorrow's possible crisis.

Sustainable food systems need to be built around the respect and enforcement of social and labour rights, as well as citizens' right to define their own food and agriculture systems. A sustainable system must be based on shared governance initiatives that modify the current model of individual land ownership to collective projects where consumers, Local Authorities, employees, volunteers are implicated in making common decisions. Those collective models, belonging to social and solidarity economy, are led by non-profit or limited pursuit of profit organisations, most of them with a concern for the common good, where optimising profit is not the structure's aim. Thus, those models are appropriate to ending a very productivity-based industrial model which aims to decrease production costs to optimise profits. Furthermore, social and solidarity organisations aim to create additional positive externalities such as social inclusion, local employment, production diversity, etc. Those initiatives led by social and solidarity economy are also an effective solution to engage all the concerned stakeholders in the project through shared



governance, to address a systemic response at local scale: Local Authorities, consumers, volunteers, employees...

Social and solidarity economy has already demonstrated its capacity to build effective models to reconcile ecology and solidarity: agricultural work led by Community Supported Agriculture and other local solidarity partnerships between producers and consumers such as farmers' coop shops, consumer cooperatives, new forms of cooperatives (such as the SCIC in France), social inclusion structures, urban agriculture, community gardens, as well as other similar structures. All those initiatives create sustainable employment and guarantee fair prices for consumers as well as farmers' and agricultural workers' rights to a decent income and livelihood. The agroecological transition of agricultural and food systems requires the involvement of all key actors concerned: National and Local Authorities, small-scale family farmers, artisanal fishers, consumers... Local Food Policy Councils are a strong means of bringing all actors together.

### What we are calling for:

#### 7 • Promote sustainable farming systems and better land management:

a. **Access to land.** For every farmer who retires, the guarantee of a right of first refusal for young farmers that commit to a sustainable agroecological and/or organic transition approach. Support new farmers' installation through cooperative models (incubators, small farming training cooperatives, Community Supported Agriculture, social inclusion organisations, etc.). Strengthen the protection of zoning of designated agricultural land, in accordance with the United Nations Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, and the United Nations Guidelines on Small Scale Fisheries, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. Implementation of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Peasants and other People living in Rural Areas and EU Farm to Fork policy.

b. **Adopt major legislation that protects agricultural land and zero artificialisation,** that encourages access to land for new farmers, enables democratic governance of the management of agricultural land, and supports agroecology rather than productivity-based industrial agriculture that produces animal feed rather than food for local populations.

c. **Biodiversity.** Support and ensure the right of farmers to exchange and reuse traditional varieties of farmers' seeds. Maintain and extend protected areas such as traditional carbon sinks, wetlands and set-aside land for biodiversity to be paid under CAP regulations.



## 8 • Increase legislative, financial and coordination support for agroecological and organic production in the European Union:


- a. The European Union should increase efforts to **implement the reduction of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers**. This means facilitating the transition towards agroecological and organic farming practices and **investing in agroecological and social solidarity economy-based innovation**, rather than techno-fixes. The EU Farm to Fork strategy's target of reaching 25% organic land by 2030 represents an important step in the right direction. Similarly, targets for the reduction of food waste should be binding and cover the entire supply chain.
- b. The European Union should commit to **supporting organic agriculture** including recognition of **Participatory Guarantee Systems and agroecological practices**. CAP support and funding should be based on these measures that should incite and support investments and development along these lines.
- c. **Support specific subsidies for small-scale family farmers who practise and convert to agroecological/organic farming** and who dedicate part of their production to social inclusion, either through Local Government subsidised box schemes or Community Supported Agriculture social inclusion.

## 9 • Support local production:

- a. The global pandemic has clearly shown the limits of long food supply chains. The resilience of **local food supply chains** has on the contrary been clear. The carbon footprint of local agroecological supply chains is far lower and the quality of food more nutritious. It is therefore essential for systems of governance to take this into account at all levels: local agroecological/organic production by small scale food producers of all kinds, local solidarity public procurement as well as access to sustainable healthy local food for all is key to the future of Europe.
- b. Territorial levels are the most relevant for identifying the needs of both producers and consumers, and thus for Local Authorities to build suitable solutions. The French **Territorial Food Projects** that were introduced in 2014 should be scaled up, generalised and strongly supported and funded at European level on the basis of food self-sufficiency, accessibility, job creation, environmental protection and inclusion in public policies such as Agenda 21, Greenways, Blue Economy etc.

**10 • Act for a socially just food economy and democratic governance initiatives.** Sustainable food systems need to be built around the respect and enforcement of social and labour rights, as well as citizens' right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Such systems also stabilise prices and avoid excessive spikes in food prices, as they are based on territorial food chains rather than long supply chains and fossil fuel or synthetic fertiliser use.

- a. To this end, due diligence should be established as a **legal standard for accountability of all food business operators**.

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- b. It is also key that the **development and up-scaling of social and solidarity economy initiatives**, such as Community Supported Agriculture and consumer cooperatives are supported in order to tackle consolidation and concentration of power in supply chains which have detrimental effects on labour conditions and distribution of value. A just transition towards fair and inclusive food systems could be enabled by establishing **democratically controlled governing bodies** (e.g. Food Policy Councils).


**11 • Support the introduction of a food safety net system at European level to ensure food security and the right to healthy nutritious food for all.** Just as European States already have health coverage and financial safety nets, we need to cover the right to healthy nutritious food through the legal introduction of food safety nets. The implementation can be best managed by Local Authorities. Effective strategies for behavioural change address the food environment as a whole and strive to help citizens by making healthy, ethical and sustainable food choices the most affordable ones. Food prices should reflect the positive or negative externalities of a certain product, hence strengthening the conceptualisation of food as a common good, underpinned by the right to food.

### **Proposal 3: From eco-design to products' end-of-life, towards a circular economy**

The European Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC has stated since 2008 that prevention (meaning also global consumption reduction and repair) and reuse must be a priority for waste management, before considering recycling or elimination. Besides, the European Waste Framework Directive 2018/851/EC and the first European circular economy action plan that has been released by the European Commission in support of the European Green Deal also define prevention and reuse as the better ways to limit waste management impacts on the environment, and both identify social and solidarity economy as a strategic industrial ecosystem to develop reuse solutions within Europe, as historical enterprises that have developed reuse belong to the social and solidarity economy.

Firstly, EU Member States must promote the sobriety approach which invites us to reduce the global consumption and invents new ways of producing and accessing everyday goods and services, in order to progress towards more frugality and the empowerment of the inhabitants. This approach that calls into question the current dominant narrative promoting and ever-increasing consumption and use of technology, resonates with the founding principles of social and solidarity economy, and relies on its actors. Member States play a crucial role in raising awareness of the advantages of sobriety and low-tech approaches, and in supporting actions helping structures and individuals to realize their transition towards this model.





In order to deploy repair and reuse solutions for every citizen, Member States need to benefit from ambitious legal frameworks to first obligate producers to consider eco-design and dedicate financial support to repair and reuse activities managed by social and solidarity economy organisations, but also to guarantee public and private specific financial measures to support the development of prevention and reuse solutions conducted by social economy organisations and Local Authorities.

### What we are calling for:


**12 • Support actions that raise awareness of and accompany the sobriety and low-tech approaches**, especially by supporting the creation of places that contribute to the materialisation of these approaches and give the opportunity to everyone to adopt repair and reuse techniques as well as to develop local cooperation in building ecosystems of initiatives committed to the transition towards a more frugal model.

**13 • Reform the whole governance of Producer Responsibility Organisations** that are only governed by producers while they legally aim to organise the whole product sector by coordinating all the concerned stakeholders: producers, Local Authorities, waste operators, social and solidarity economy organisations, civil society, etc. The whole philosophy of the EPR schemes must be revised to make waste prevention and reuse a priority rather than recycling in order to respect the European legal frameworks.

**14 • Make sure that Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO) respect their European obligation to cover at least 80% of the optimised waste management costs, and make sure that reuse activities are included within waste management.** Currently, we note that PRO do not respect this obligation for the waste management led by Local Authorities, but also regarding the necessary financial support of reuse activities. One of the reasons they do not respect this coverage of 80% on field is because there are several ways to calculate what optimised costs are. The effective calculation method of those optimised costs should be laid down with precision within the European rules. Furthermore, Member States should be able to establish what optimised costs are within national laws.

**15 • Create prevention funds for social and solidarity economy or non-profit organisations at European level.** Those prevention funds will be managed within each Member State and will be supplied by all the existing Producer Responsibility Organisations (i.e. not only PRO concerned by reuse activities but every existing PRO – examples: packaging, hazardous waste, batteries, etc.) according to their responsibility to respect the European waste management hierarchy that prioritises prevention and reuse to recycling and eliminating. Those funds will be governed by all the concerned stakeholders within different colleges: social economy organisations working on reuse, Local Authorities, environmental protection NGOs, social and charitable NGOs. The money that will be collected through those funds will be used to support preventive actions within territories, and most of all reuse activities led by social and solidarity





economy organisations to mobilize citizens. In fact, social and solidarity economy organisations working on repair and reuse activities play a central role in raising citizens' awareness to consume fewer new products in order to reduce the pressure on resources. This is a mission of general interest that has no existing economic model and needs to be supported through EPR schemes to address the waste management hierarchy that defines waste prevention as a priority.

**16 • Encourage and support Local Authorities to develop local infrastructures and planning** that are compatible with the circular economy: logistic platforms for storage allowing better stock management, electric charging stations and delivery trucks, last mile green solutions delivery within urban areas, etc.

**17 • Encourage the European Commission to ensure Member States adopt favourable regimes of VAT reduction and deductibility for social and solidarity economy organisations involved in repair activities (not reuse activities) while ensuring they can upscale their impact by engaging in fair competition with mainstream businesses and other actors.** Social and solidarity economy organisations involved in repair (and not reuse) are in a unique position to respond to the objectives of the European Green Deal while at the same time enabling a green transition that is fair and just by including vulnerable categories of citizens within their activities. The newly amended Directive 2016/112/EC on Modernised VAT Regime in the European Union positively introduces up to two different reduced rates no lower than 5% and the introduction of an exemption with deductibility of the VAT rate for a set of repair activities defined in Annex III of the Directive. However, while it remains fundamental to allow social enterprises involved in repair to grow and upscale their impact, it is crucial that these grounds for VAT reduction do not preclude social and solidarity economy organisations from accessing a level playing field competition with more resourceful mainstream businesses involved in the repair sector.

**18 • Forbid, or at least supervise, the discount vouchers that producers distribute to consumers to collect reusable products** in order to develop their own reuse brand. In fact, this system is not a solution to struggle with the big pressure that exists on primary resources, but only a way for producers to encourage consumers to buy even more new products. Furthermore, this conduct competes with the reuse activities led by non-profit organisations by collecting all the better products those non-profit organisations will still not been able to access, even though they currently represent an important part of their economic model. This behaviour is also a way to ruin the gift habits of people for solidarity reasons because they get used to financially benefiting from every product they no longer need, where they previously gave unused products to those in need.



## **Proposal 4: Implement energy transition based on sobriety, the energy efficiency of buildings and renewable energies, essentially produced by community-owned systems**

Energy transition is a main concern and a great challenge for our society, especially regarding the recent conflict between Ukraine and Russia that poses the question of European energy independence. This energy transition is all the more necessary because the current system poses the threats of climatic impacts of fossil energies through greenhouse gas emissions, increasing scarcity of energy stocks (oil, gas, coal, uranium) and the governance aspects of centralised and neo-liberal systems.


To achieve an efficient energy transition, the first lever to mobilise is energy sobriety which implies reducing energy consumption. Sobriety can then be achieved by energy efficiency and the renovation of buildings that enable decreased energy consumption. This also supports households struggling with energy precarity. The European Energy Poverty Observatory estimated that 50 millions of people were suffering from energy precarity in 2016, while Énergie Solidaire estimates that around 80 millions of people are now suffering from it.

To complement the schemes of sobriety and energy efficiency, it is necessary to massively invest in the production of renewable energies to meet the existing needs, especially in community-owned projects. These projects, also called renewable energy communities, are indeed a reality: around 2 000 European energy cooperatives are already contributing to the energy transition in Europe; they represent 1 250 000 citizens. These cooperatives and structures with democratic principles and governance, associate citizens and Local Authorities within local energy projects. Economic benefits at local level, creation of local solidarity schemes, better social acceptability of renewable energy production projects: renewable energy communities have numerous advantages, recognized at the European level in 2018 through the Winter Package. Now is the time to go further, and to maximise the potential of the citizens' energy movement. Last but not least, at a time when Europe is facing an energy crisis, it is essential to recognize that local communities can provide a shield against the impacts of high corporation-led electricity and gas prices and volatility.

### **What we are calling for:**

#### **19 • Maximise the potential for citizens and their communities to contribute to the achievement of more ambitious renewable energy targets set at the EU level:**

- a. The European Commission recently introduced a new binding 2030 EU level renewable energy target of at least 40%. While this new target is more ambitious than the previous one, it should be increased to at least 50% by 2030, and reinforced with a long-term target of 100% renewable energy by 2040. Moreover,



an increased target should be backed up by binding national targets, to ensure the 2030 EU target is met.

- b. To reach these objectives as well as to accelerate the energy independence of the EU, the potential of community owned projects must be maximised, through the elaboration of concrete measures including:
  - o Simplification and reduction of burdensome administrative procedures (administrative procedures, permitting and notification procedures for renewable projects), which are particularly problematic for citizen owned projects, by providing further clarity to the overarching rules, so that barriers at national level are removed.
  - o Establishment of national and sub-national objectives for citizen and local community ownership and production of renewables.
  - o Robust urban, spatial and energy planning for local renewables production and storage, as well as grid infrastructure.
  - o Clearer rules and provision of support to Local Authorities so they can use public procurement to collaborate with local citizen-led initiatives.


**20 • Reinforce the ambition of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive:**

- a. Every building in Europe must have an energy performance diagnosis, at the risk of undermining the applicability of measures based on this tool.
- b. Contrary to the stated objectives, efficient renovation will not take off in Europe if the ambition of the support measures is not considerably increased.
- c. Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the entire life cycle of buildings, from production to deconstruction, must be introduced in Europe.
- d. The role and means of action of energy communities must be strengthened.

**21 • Reinforce the ambition of the Energy Efficiency Directive:**

- a. The binding European objective of reducing energy consumption must be raised to 45% by 2030, compared to the 2007 European reference scenario (compared to 36% currently proposed by the Commission).
- b. The national implementation of energy efficiency objectives must be binding.

**22 • Support building self-rehabilitation practices carried out by households themselves** and which can be accompanied by social and solidarity economy organisations at the local level. In fact, they represent initiatives that encourage locally solidarity and citizens' mobilisation.



## Proposal 5: For a European sustainable mobility by putting bicycle and rail traffic at the heart of mobility planning

In 2019, the European Commission presented the Green Deal for Europe, a roadmap to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. In the transport sector, the Green Deal focuses on a smart and sustainable TEN-T, long-distance and cross-border rail traffic, intelligent transport services for drivers and cleaner, greener and easier urban mobility.

Three major announcements were published by the European Commission in December 2021 as part of the "efficient and green mobility" package:

- Two legislative proposals that offer great opportunities for the development of cycling: the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).
- The new European Urban Mobility Framework (UMF).

Despite that, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the transport sector continue to increase. Meanwhile, the transition to zero-emission cars and trucks will take decades to complete and will not solve other problems like traffic congestion and sedentary lifestyles. The world therefore needs much more cycling and train if we are to combat climate change.

While railway markets are opening all over the European Union, European and national institutions must consider the need for a stronger railway system in order to make this major market change effectively. New operators and better services can transfer people and goods from road to rail, only if well-maintained infrastructure and performant rolling stock are available.

Cycling represents one of humanity's greatest hopes for a shift towards a zero-carbon future. Bicycle use produces zero emissions, delivers far-reaching positive societal impacts and – most importantly – is a technology that is already widely available today. Financing new cycling infrastructure for the present and near future must be a centrepiece of Europe's actions to reduce emissions from motorised transport and mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### What we are calling for:

**23 • Increase the investments in rail infrastructure** and rolling stock, particularly for night trains.

**24 • Offer better public and private financing for new railway undertakings**, especially for services of public interest and operators of the social economy.



**25 • Ensure more funding for high quality cycling infrastructure** by integrating cycling infrastructure developments into future TEN-T projects.

**26 • Introduce a legal minimum requirement of at least 1.5 bicycle parking spaces** per residential unit in new and renovated apartment buildings by recasting Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

**27 • Ensure more funding for investment in and accompanying of urban and suburban cycle logistics** (example: “ColisActiv” program that helps fund logistics by active mobility; training program dedicated to small cycle logistics entrepreneurs - “Ma cyclo-entreprise”, ADEME and French Ministry of Ecological Transition).

**28 • Encourage Member States to promote social inclusion and a circular economy in the biking sector** through the Commission recommendations for Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. Develop a strategy aiming at similar results for **rural mobility**.


## **Proposal 6: Generalising eco-building solutions by spreading skills and adapting education and training**

Eco-building solutions mean:

- autonomous and creative workers;
- healthy, low carbon/energy/petrol, renewable & reusable building materials;
- a holistic place-based approach and sober, bioclimatic design, including renovation works;
- buildings encouraging multi-purpose and their potential reuse or recycling;
- professional cooperation processes based on permaculture, cross-sector networks, dialogue between craftspeople and responsible users;
- local production, reuse, manufacturing and jobs;
- modifying the value chain to rebalance value distribution between actors from site workers to sales.

None of these topics are central or even part of mainstream education and training for construction professionals in Europe. All of them are the heart of the work of a few hundreds of training centres focussing on eco-building throughout Europe.

Most of these training centres are grass-roots NGOs, non-profit and small scale that have been continuously expanding, institutionalising and professionalizing their training offer. They deliver continuous training for all levels, from homeowners to architects, from construction site workers to engineers. They build on a continuous transnational flow of knowledge and skills: since the beginning through the mobility of outstanding passionate professionals, and since 2002 through institutionally funded international cooperation (i.e. EU Leonardo da Vinci & Erasmus grants).



Since 2007, a coherent set of units of learning outcomes for earth and straw bale building techniques has been developed in transnational cooperation. These open resources are a basis for high quality course contents, curricula and assessment, for workers, site managers and designers. In 2017, Fédération Ecoconstruire has started transnational cooperation to develop training for trainers, together with a European consortium gathering the ASBN (Austrian Strawbal building network), BiWeNa (German ecobuilding training center), ArTUR (Slovakian ecobuilding training center), Ebuki (UK and Ireland earth building network), Asterre (French earth building network), RFCP (French strawbal building network) and Tillitsverket (Swedish educational association). After the often isolated yet consistent initiatives of certain universities, public vocational schools are now reaching out to train their trainers in eco-building techniques. Despite the positive and encouraging outcomes of long term, cross-border collaborations, the social economy specialised in eco-building and training is struggling to ensure continued existence of organisations and training offers. Fluctuating and rival funding policies for life-long adult training prevent them from reaching the next level of development attuned to the gigantic needs of energy efficiency of buildings and navigate the construction industry towards and through a profound ecological transition.

Building material techniques respecting human health, the environment and our planet's carrying capacity exist, have been tested and are well documented. Social and solidarity economy organisations are ready to support the conversion of the conventional construction and training sector towards eco-building solutions. The scope is high and so is the motivation and commitment of the eco-builders to transfer their skills, knowledge and competence gained over the last 40 years at the margin of a consumerist, polluting and extractive society.


### What we are calling for:

#### 29 • Fund training for:

- a. **trainers so that they can integrate bio-climatism, low-carbon and reused materials, as well as multi-purpose and the building's own recycling potential into all vocational and higher education on building, be it initial or on-going for all levels and targets.** A broader audience needs to be introduced to eco-responsible approaches that involve all site activities: location, supply, workstation organisation, implementation, waste management and reuse.
- b. **self-help building techniques** increasing individual autonomy for a transition towards more resilience.

**30 • Contribute to the recognition of eco-building training courses.** At local and regional levels: support communication with a broader audience. At national level: recognize certifications and acknowledge vocational training centres. At the European level: allow





**translation of the resources.** Eco-building and heritage restoration are specialities that must be recognized by training funds, certifying bodies and insurers. Our multidisciplinary training courses are adapted to the market: builders acquire skills to run small projects addressing the complexity of thermal renovation projects but reducing the costs. In this approach, the customer may also be required to participate, making the projects affordable for as many people as possible.

**31 • Secure the eco-building vocational training sector and resettle a predictive management of jobs and territorial skills on current and future professional needs in the building sector.** We need to implement diagnosis by social and solidarity economy organisations working with and for the building sector to set shared objectives for both building and training sectors. When necessary, certification engineering must be funded to create diplomas that contribute to widely integrating professional know-how and good practices into initial training. It is also the first step to promote the emergence of new training offers in territories where no offer exists in our areas of expertise.

**32 • Contribute to research and development in eco-building, based on local social economy organisations and towards non-industrial materials.** Initiatives that allow and facilitate reuse of materials at the end of life, those that promote biodiversity and reduce digital impacts will be a new way of improvement. We are calling to undertake research on the thermal renovation of existing buildings and the relevance of bio-based materials in these areas to allow the evolution of thermal regulations and develop innovative construction techniques.

**33 • Support and foster individuals' implication within the transition towards a green economy through vocational training.** In addition to technical learnings, we support direct experience, free games, practice, craft and artistic or creative value, freedom, autonomy, connexion to nature, etc. Public policies that foster eco-building training need to provide means of support and generalise practices such as pre-qualification and immersion to attract, motivate, test and experiment. We need time in trainings for those experiences that support inclusion of trainees in local professional field, or the creation of companies strongly involved in local economy.



## Towards a collaborative and responsible digital model for the economy of tomorrow

In the framework of the European Action Plan for Social Economy, on which the Social Good Accelerator has worked, and especially of the need to see new ideas emerge to strengthen the resilient capacities of all, social and solidarity economy necessarily has a role to play.








However, as our study - "Cooperation between social utility and tech actors in Europe" - has shown, most social and solidarity economy organisations - whatever their statutes - encounter obstacles in their development similar to those of very small enterprises, with additional difficulties linked to their lack of profitability, the financing of projects to the detriment of structures, and the lack of sectoral organisation on these issues.

To meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, the Social Good Accelerator believes that the digital transition can be an opportunity to finally scale up the European social economy, provided that it creates real alternatives and new economic, social and environmental opportunities. To activate this lever, the Social Good Accelerator is promoting and developing digital mediation, UX design and open data.

### What we are calling for:

- 34 • Ensure effective equal opportunities and rights to digital transformation.**
- 35 • Develop digital skills through digital citizenship** and acculturation to the new professions of Social Tech.
- 36 • Unlock funding for digital innovation in social and solidarity economy organisations** and for the development of new models.
- 37 • Promote alternative cooperative models for the development of a digital economy of the commons.**

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## Other contributions

