

UN

Inter-Agency Task Force on
Social and Solidarity Economy

KNOWLEDGE HUB RESOURCES

Mapping of Intergovernmental Documentation on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

Version 1.0

MAY 2018



The logo consists of the letters 'UN' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid blue square.

Inter-Agency Task Force on
Social and Solidarity Economy

The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (TFSSE) was established to raise the visibility of the SSE in international knowledge and policy circles. We believe that SSE holds considerable promise for addressing the economic, social and environmental integrated approaches of sustainable development.

TFSSE brings together UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, as well as umbrella associations of SSE networks as members and observers. Task Force activities include organizing events at UN and other international conferences, dialoguing with policy makers, preparing and disseminating publications, and engaging in collaborative projects involving TFSSE members and observers. <https://unsse.org/>



Publication of this document was coordinated by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). UNRISD is an autonomous research institute within the UN system that undertakes interdisciplinary research and policy analysis on the social dimensions of contemporary development issues. <http://www.unrisd.org/>

Copyright © TFSSE. Short extracts from this publication may be reproduced unaltered without authorization on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to TFSSE, Geneva, Switzerland. TFSSE welcomes such applications.

The designations employed in this publication, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material herein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of TFSSE or its members concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Contents

Introduction	1
AFRICA	3
<i>African Development Bank (AfDB)</i>	4
<i>African Union</i>	4
<i>Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)</i>	5
<i>UN-led initiatives</i>	5
ASIA	6
<i>Asian Development Bank (ADB)</i>	7
<i>Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)</i>	7
<i>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)</i>	8
<i>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)</i>	8
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	10
<i>Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America</i> <i>Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA)</i>	11
<i>Community of Latin American and Caribbean States</i> <i>Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC)</i>	12
<i>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)</i> <i>Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)</i>	12
<i>Inter-American Development Bank</i> <i>Banco Inter-Americano de Desarrollo (IDB)</i>	13

<i>Southern Common Market</i>	
<i>Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR)</i>	13
<i>Union of South American Nations</i>	
<i>Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR)</i>	14
WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA REGION	16
<i>League of Arab States</i>	17
<i>United Nations Economic and Social Commission of West Asia (ESCWA)</i>	17
<i>Remarks on Initiatives at the National Level</i>	17
EUROPE	18
<i>The European Union</i>	19
<i>The European Commission</i>	19
<i>The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union</i>	21
<i>European Economic and Social Committee</i>	23
<i>The European Committee of the Regions</i>	25
<i>The European Central Bank</i>	25
<i>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)</i>	25
INTERNATIONAL	26
<i>International Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy (ILGSSE)</i>	27
<i>Group of Twenty (G20)</i>	27
<i>Group of Eight (G8) / Group of Seven (G7)</i>	28
<i>Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF)</i>	29
<i>Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)</i>	30
<i>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</i>	30
<i>Mercociudades</i>	32
<i>Metropolis</i>	33
<i>United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)</i>	33

Mapping of Intergovernmental Documentation on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

Introduction

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the level of interest of policy makers in the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). While an expanding body of research is documenting the uptake of SSE discourse at the level of national governments, less is known about the level of interest of intergovernmental organizations in SSE. While many such organizations have a long history of support for specific SSE-related sectors such as cooperatives and non-profits, it is only relatively recently that they are referring to terms such as social economy, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, social/solidarity finance, solidarity economy or SSE itself, within their policy statements, research and regulations.

The following study, conducted on behalf of the United Nations Task Force on SSE, reviews the extent to which intergovernmental organizations are talking the talk of SSE by referring to these terms. The organizations reviewed include regional organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East; global organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and specific groupings of governments such as the OECD, the G7 and G20. SSE organizations and networks comprising or established by national or local governments, such as the Leading Group on SSE, the Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF), Mercociudades, Metropolis and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), are also included. A subsequent phase of this research will address more systematically the uptake of SSE terminology within United Nations organizations.

Understanding if and how the terminology of SSE is being adopted by intergovernmental organizations is important for gauging the prospects for crafting an enabling policy environment for SSE. Such organizations can play a key role in the diffusion of innovative approaches to development, nationally, regionally and internationally. Yet the following review confirms what has long been known about the trajectory of new, progressive or radical ideas when they enter the arena of mainstream development institutions. They are likely to be molded in ways that allow them to sit

comfortably with the existing institutional and political culture of the organization in question. In some contexts, this may mean that the new discourse of SSE represents a fundamentally progressive shift in approach. In others, radical concepts can be diluted with aspects of SSE essentially bolted on to or simply tweaking business as usual.

A number of trends that shed light on the substance of discursive and policy change are apparent. Three, in particular, stand out.

1. The uptake of SSE-related terminology within intergovernmental organizations has generally occurred in a context where policy makers have had to pay increasing attention to issues of social inclusion, inclusive growth and sustainability, particularly following the global financial crisis and in the context of the implementation of the UN development agenda associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Quite different interpretations of SSE or social economy are noticeable. Despite intra-regional variations, the widespread use of the term 'solidarity economy' in Latin America implies a critique of business as usual and suggests the need for a fundamentally different approach to development. This contrasts with the perspectives of many regional organizations in Asia and Africa, or international financial institutions, that tend to limit their interest in SSE to the promotion and scaling up of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. This approach is more in keeping with the trend towards socially responsible enterprise that has been in vogue since the 1990s rather than a more fundamental questioning of dominant patterns of growth and distribution.
3. The trajectory of discursive change varies by organization. The widespread use of "social economy" within the European Union, for example, signals an attempt to go beyond a sectoral approach that, over several decades, had focused on cooperatives, mutual associations and non-profits. The use of this umbrella term acknowledges not only the fact that multiple types of organizations and enterprises share normative goals but that this ensemble constitutes a distinctive approach to development. Within IFIs and several Asian and African organizations, growing attention to social enterprise and social entrepreneurship reflects the attempt to add values of social inclusion onto the traditional focus on small and medium-sized enterprise development. Within several organizations, including for example, ECLAC and the World Bank, recent interest in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship represents the latest stage of development of policy approaches that centre on innovation.

The information in the pages that follow is, however, primarily descriptive; it simply documents the use of the SSE-related terms noted above within official statements and publications. Beyond, the broad observations just noted about variations in approach, we leave it to readers and future research to assess the substance of the discursive shifts that are occurring at the level of intergovernmental organizations.

AFRICA

African Development Bank (AfDB)

“Inclusive development is at the heart of the priorities of the African Development Bank. The African continent is ready for the development of the **social economy**,” African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka stated at the national [conference on social business in Tunisia](#), organized by the African Development Bank’s Human Development Department and Yunus Social Business in 2013.

The 2013–2017 [Private Sector Development Strategy](#) of the AfDB signaled the “significant potential [of] **social enterprises and social businesses** [as] an effective way of fostering social innovation, entrepreneurship and value chain development. They can also be combined with microfinance to broaden effectiveness, development impact and sustainability”.

The Bank signaled its intention to support incubation projects that “will deepen understanding, help foster institutional environments and help establish financial vehicles (e.g. revolving funds) to assist **social enterprises**. The Bank will also consider direct financing, funding for incubators, awareness raising, technical assistance and capacity building to commercially viable social business schemes” p.16.

African Union

The [concept note](#) prepared for the Joint European Commission and African Union Commission Capacity Building Workshop on Social Protection in Africa—Sharing Experience on the Informal Economy, held in Nairobi in 2011, noted that:

Africa and the European Union are engaged in a Strategic Partnership built around 8 areas... As regards the Partnership on ‘Migration, Mobility and Employment’ (MME), [the] Action Plan focuses on the implementation of the Ouagadougou Action Plan and the global ‘Decent Work Agenda’ with special emphasis on the creation of more, more productive and better jobs in Africa and the link to social protection as well as to the informal and **social economy**.

At the [Special Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the African Union](#) (Windhoek, Namibia 23–25 April 2014), ministers agreed that **social economy** would be one of six key policy issues discussed at the forthcoming Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

At the Summit, held in Burkina Faso in 2014 to review progress in implementing the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Heads of State and Government [recognized](#)

the private sector as the engine for wealth creation and jobs creation, and MINDFUL that Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs), Micro Enterprises, the Rural Sector and **Social Economy** are the main sources to create jobs, enhance inclusive growth and foster the social contract to ensure social stability, while they are faced with specific obstacles and shortcomings that need to be removed.

They [committed](#) themselves to “focus on eliminating the huge underemployment and low productivity affecting the workers in the SMEs, the Informal Economy, the **Social Economy** and the Rural Sector, with the aim to boost wealth and accelerate the enlargement of the middle class in Africa; develop an African skills for jobs platforms/initiatives on agriculture, minerals, industrial development and services”.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

In 2006 the ECA and the African Union co-organized the 5th African Development Forum on Youth and Leadership in the 21st Century (16 November, Addis Ababa). [The ADF Consensus statement](#) called on governments to “take bold steps towards education policies to make them relevant to the needs of the knowledge economy [and to] comprehensively [design] curriculum that deals with the culture of basic and **social entrepreneurship** and self-development”.

UN-led initiatives

Intergovernmental institutions, including the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, NEPAD, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, have partnered with UNDP’s African Facility for Inclusive Markets to conduct [research](#) on “**inclusive business**”. This work has focused on how **social enterprises** can be scaled up through the development of enabling eco-systems.

The ILO has played an important role in raising the visibility of social economy in policy circles in Africa via regional meetings.

The [ILO Regional Conference on The Social Economy](#)—Africa’s Response to the Global Crisis was held in Johannesburg from 19 to 21 October 2009. Among other things, a consensus was found on the concept of SSE, and since then the ILO and the UNTFSSSE have referred to the **SSE** as a “concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular **cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises**, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity”.

The [12th African Regional Meeting](#), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 11–14 October 2011, emphasized the role of social economy in the transition from informal to formal economy. The conclusion to the meetings “emphasized that priority must be given to the process of formalization”. The Meeting expressed the view that because of their nature, values, principles and characteristics, social economy organizations and enterprises were well suited to build a bridge between the informal and formal economies, and to reduce the aforementioned decent work deficits.

Governments should take the following measures to promote the **social economy**: (i) create a conducive legal and institutional environment; (ii) establish a framework for consultation and exchange of knowledge; (iii) build the capacity of **social economy** leaders, promoters and regulators; (iv) fight discrimination of any form in the **social economy**; and (v) apply the values and principles of the **social economy** to public policy.

The [13th ILO African Regional Meeting](#) referred to the social economy as well. Paragraph 7 of the outcome document stressed that “Africa’s public sector and **social economy** can also play important roles in the transformation process”.

UNAIDS partnered with the ECA and AU Commission to host the [Side Event](#): “Ending AIDS by 2030: The 90-90-90 Target as a platform for sound investments, **social entrepreneurship** and economic development”, at the 8th AUC and [ECA Joint Annual Meetings](#) for African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Addis Ababa, 29 March 2015).

ASIA

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB priorities associated with pro-poor sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development growth and private sector development have sharpened the focus on social enterprises within its operations. The ADB [recognizes](#): that “**social enterprises** are self-sustaining businesses that address social or environmental concerns, and provide jobs, goods, and services to the disadvantaged...and the important contributions that **social enterprises** can make to inclusive economic and social development”.

As part of the Regional Research and Development Technical Assistance project, Developing a Regional Social Investment Exchange Initiative, the ADB supported, between 2010 and 2013, a feasibility study for a regional social stock exchange to link **social enterprises (SEs)** seeking capital with impact investors. The [technical assistance](#) sought

to promote inclusive growth by stimulating the development of **SEs** providing goods, services, and livelihood opportunities to poor and disadvantaged people in developing Asia.... **SEs** show great potential to be useful means of channeling private resources into the achievement of development objectives, and ADB itself has begun to invest in **SEs** through its private sector operations.... Regional departments should consider **SEs** for certain project implementation roles; in some instances, they may be better suited than a local NGO or commercial consultancy to carry out a particular assignment.

In 2014 the ADB realigned its operations to emphasize inclusiveness and build resilience. In this context the Bank has increased its support for social enterprises, providing funding and facilitating access to capital from impact investors. “In recent years, ADB has supported research, analysis, awareness-building, and networking to promote **social enterprises**, impact investment, and inclusive business” [Bart Édes, ADB's Director of Poverty Reduction, Gender and Social Development](#).

In 2016, the ADB and the SAARC Development Fund [signed](#) an MoU for co-financing of projects, regional connectivity and development of the SAARC region. The agreement included provisions related to technical assistance and investment for co-financing for projects supported by the **Social Enterprise Development Programme**.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

SSE terminology has recently found its way into ASEAN policy documents. The [ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025](#) identified social enterprises and social entrepreneurship as key stakeholder and spheres of action to be promoted and supported by the ASEAN community.

It focuses on multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagements, including Dialogue and Development Partners, sub-regional organisations, academia, local governments in provinces, townships, municipalities and cities, private public partnerships, community engagement, tripartite engagement with the labour sector, **social enterprises**, government organisation, non-governmental organisation, civil society organisation (GO-NGO/CSO) engagement, corporate social responsibility (CSR), interfaith and intercultural

dialogue, with emphasis on raising and sustaining awareness and caring societies of ASEAN, as well as deepening the sense of ASEAN identity. p.4

“Promote and nurture creative and inclusive **social entrepreneurship** for youths, persons with disabilities, women and vulnerable and marginalised groups.” p.20

“It shall also promote public private partnerships (PPP), **social entrepreneurship** and CSR for inclusive and sustainable socio-cultural development.” p.22

In 2016, the ASEAN Foundation through the Japan-ASEAN Solidarity Foundation supported the [ASEAN Conference on Social Entrepreneurship](#) which aimed:

- to provide a platform to promote and support **social entrepreneurship** by connecting, sharing and learning from one another
- highlight different models of public-private-people engagement between social enterprise, corporations and governments in ASEAN Member States
- foster collaborations between social enterprises, organizations supporting social enterprises, governments and academia to build stronger ecosystem regionally and in ASEAN Member States.

[Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(ESCAP\)](#)

In 2012 the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) was set up to promote the active engagement of the business sector in addressing the issues of environmental sustainable and social inclusiveness in business, in the Asia and Pacific region. To achieve its objectives, ESBN established a task force on Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and **Social Enterprise**.

The concepts and application of **social enterprise** and social impact investment have been gathering momentum in the region. The three dimensions of sustainable development embodied in the SDGs – economic, social and environmental – underpin the transition to a sustainable future. Several governments in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the United Kingdom Government have been at the forefront of innovative policymaking on this agenda. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, 27 February, 2017, [announcing an agreement with the British Council](#) to promote the growth of social enterprise and social impact investment across the Asia-Pacific region as a means of supporting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\)](#)

The [Thirteenth SAARC Summit](#) (Dhaka, 12–13 November 2005) established the SAARC Development Fund to serve as the “umbrella financial mechanism” for all SAARC projects and programmes. SDF is primarily engaged in investment, infrastructure and social sectors such as empowering women, health care services, ending violence against women and children, education programs, funding needs of disadvantaged segments such as poor farmers and rural development. In 2015 [SDF’s Social Enterprise Development program](#) (SEDP) was established. The goal of the SEDP is to leverage knowledge, skills and social mobilization capacity of social enterprises to scale and disseminate innovative solutions in the SAARC Region and

raise the awareness of governments, donors, business community, and international development organizations.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Development Fund (SDF) and the World Bank Group (WBG) announced in 2015 that they had forged a [multi-year partnership](#) to design and implement SDF's Social Enterprise Development Program (SEDP) in eight SAARC countries. The partnership aims to improve the quality and delivery of basic services to the poorest and underserved populations across South Asia by combining finance, global knowledge, and capacity development support for 100 social enterprises that will receive grants of USD 100,000 to 250,000 per enterprise. Thereafter, SDF will provide finance to these enterprises to enable them to scale their impact. "From mobile clinics to community banking, South Asia is home to many **social enterprises** that are doing a great job at filling service delivery gaps that cannot be met through traditional means. We are thrilled to partner with the World Bank Group that has a unique experience in supporting social enterprises to maximize the positive impact they can have on society" Mr. Karma, CEO of SDF.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA)*

Principles and practices related to SSE are central to the South-South co-operation agreement, ALBA, which promotes regional integration, endogenous development and social inclusion as an alternative to the model associated with Free Trade agreements.

During the closing ceremony of the II Unefa Congress on **Social Economy** in 2009, ALBA co-founder, Hugo Chávez, [stated](#):

Una de las grandes desviaciones del capitalismo es pretender separar a la economía de lo político o de lo social; es como si alguien pretenda quitarle el oxígeno al agua y pretender decir que eso es agua. Una economía que esté desarraigada, descontextualizada de lo político y social realmente no es economía. La economía es una ciencia fundamentalmente social y política, no tecnocrática.

One of the greatest abnormalities of capitalism is the idea that the economy can be separated from the political and the social; it is as if someone tries to remove oxygen from water and then say that what remains is water. An economy that is detached and decontextualized from the political and the social is no longer an economy. The economy is fundamentally a social and political science, not a technocratic one.

The ALBA project has sought to promote regionally what in Venezuela are referred to as “Enterprises of Social Production” ([Empresas de Producción Social](#)).

Se entiende por **Empresas de Producción Social**

unidades de producción comunitarias, constituidas bajo la figura jurídica que corresponda, tiene como objetivo fundamental generar bienes y servicios que satisfagan las necesidades básicas y esenciales de la comunidad y su entorno, incorporando hombres y mujeres de las misiones, privilegiando los valores de solidaridad, cooperación, complementariedad, reciprocidad, equidad y sustentabilidad, ante el valor de rentabilidad o de ganancia (Decreto 3895 12/09/05)

At the [VII Summit of ALBA in 2009](#), Heads of State

affirmed [their] determination to implement the Development and Implementation Plan related to Trade Matters [which includes]: collaboration in the organization and realization of the community missions...with the objective of promoting trade involving new commercial actors, such as **cooperatives, communes, enterprises of social production**, small and medium enterprises, among others.

Los Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno de los países miembros de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), reunidos en la VII Cumbre Extraordinaria del ALBA-TCP...afirmamos nuestra determinación de llevar a la práctica el presente Plan de Desarrollo e Implementación en Materia Comercial...[que incluye]: La colaboración en la organización y realización de misiones comunitarias de acercamiento con el objeto de contribuir a una mayor presencia comercial promoviendo a los nuevos

actores comerciales, tales como *las cooperativas, comunas, empresas de producción social*, pequeñas y medianas empresas, entre otros. 17 de octubre de 2009, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

One of the objectives of the [Banco de ALBA](#), created in 2008 to develop and support projects facilitating regional integration, is “Social Development in relation to health, education, housing, social security, community development and **social economy**”. (*Desarrollo Social en materia de: salud, educación, vivienda, seguridad social, desarrollo comunitario y **economía social**.*)

[Community of Latin American and Caribbean States](#) [Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños \(CELAC\)](#)

At the III Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in January 2015, it was [agreed](#), inter alia, to: “Focus the work towards the social, economic and financial inclusion and cooperation amongst CELAC member States, centered on the human talent, with an awareness of the need to develop national inclusive development policies that support this objective, including SMEs, entrepreneurship, **enterprises of social production [and] cooperatives.**” (*“Focalizar los trabajos hacia la inclusión social, económica y financiera y la cooperación entre los países de la CELAC, centrada en el talento humano, teniendo conciencia de la necesidad de gestar políticas nacionales de desarrollo inclusivas, que apoyen este fin, incluidas las PYMES, los emprendimientos, **las empresas de producción social y de las cooperativas.**”*)

[Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC\)](#) [Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe \(CEPAL\)](#)

ECLAC’s history of engagement with the discourse on SSE dates from the origin of the concept “economy of solidarity”, coined by the Chilean economist, Luis Razeto in 1984. In 1985 CEPAL co-organized the workshop “[Economía de Solidaridad y Mercado Democrático](#)” to examine the concept and how it might be applied in certain programmes.

In 1987 CEPAL hosted Pope John Paul II who delivered a [speech](#) insisting that governments and other actors: “Construct in the region an economy of solidarity!” (“¡Construid en la región una **economía de la solidaridad!**”).

More recently CEPAL and the Institute for Planning have focused on social enterprises within the scope of their work on social innovation and local economic development. Between 2004 and 2010, CEPAL and the Kellogg Foundation organized the regional competition “[Experiences of Social Innovation](#)”, which [identified elements of success](#) of social enterprises.

A 2010 report on “[Social Innovation and Local Economic Development](#)”, published by CEPAL’s Division of Social Development and Latin American and Caribbean Institute of Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), emphasized the role of collective action and associative practices: “In all the cases analysed...the **associative practices of producers** is one of the keys to success.” (*“En todos los casos aquí analizados...la **asociatividad entre productores** es una de las claves del éxito.”*)

Inter-American Development Bank Banco Inter-Americano de Desarrollo (IDB)

In the context of its work on promoting social innovation, the IDB has supported studies on social enterprises such as, for instance, “[Panorama actual de la innovación social en Colombia](#)” (2015).

Southern Common Market Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR)

In 2001, the entity known as the Special Meeting of Cooperatives (RECM) of MERCOSUR and the Presidency pro tempore of the Joint Parliamentary Commission (CPC) of MERCOSUR co-organized a seminar on “**Social Economy in the European Union and MERCOSUR**”, which agreed the [Montevideo Declaration](#), calling on:

Parliamentarians of the European Union and MERCOSUR, together with parliamentarians of Latin America and the Caribbean, to foster integration processes and joint action to promote cooperatives and **social economy**. [...] In addition, we will attempt to ensure that the official Declaration of the IV Summit of Heads of State of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean [to be held in May 2006] include the following sentence: In conformity with the spirit of ILO Recommendation 193 and the communication of the European Commission on the Promotion of Cooperatives, we recognize the role of cooperatives and other enterprises and organizations of the **social economy** in the development of our countries given their contribution to social cohesion, the generation of jobs and decent work, strengthening democracy, the development of an ethic of solidarity, and social responsibility.

*Los parlamentarios de la Unión Europea y el MERCOSUR, junto a los parlamentarios de América Latina y el Caribe impulsen los procesos de integración y la acción conjunta para la promoción de las cooperativas y la **economía social**. [...] Se procurará, además que la Declaración oficial de la IV Cumbre de Jefes de Estado de Europa, América Latina y el Caribe [a realizarse en mayo de 2006] incluya la siguiente frase: Coincidiendo con el espíritu de la Recomendación 193 de la OIT y de la Comunicación de la Comisión Europea sobre la Promoción de las Cooperativas, reconocemos el papel de las cooperativas y demás empresas y organizaciones de la **economía social** en el desarrollo de nuestros países por su contribución a la cohesión social, a la generación de puestos de trabajo digno, al fortalecimiento de la democracia, al desarrollo de una ética de la solidaridad, y a la responsabilidad social.*

In 2007 the Structural Convergence Fund of MERCOSUR (*Fondo de Convergencia Estructural del MERCOSUR—FOCEM*) funded the [Pilot Project on Social Economy in Frontier Zones](#) under its Social Cohesion Programme. The project, co-ordinated by the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, “aims to strengthen income generating strategies of poor people by supporting **productive associative enterprises** and the promotion of trade linked to frontier zones with Argentina and Brazil” [Ministry of Social Development \(MIDES\)](#), Uruguay. In the original: “[S]e propone contribuir al fortalecimiento de estrategias de generación de ingresos de personas en situación de pobreza, a partir del apoyo a **emprendimientos**

productivos asociativos y la promoción de experiencias de intercambio comercial micro regional desde los departamentos fronterizos con Argentina y Brasil.”

The [XXII Meeting](#) of Ministers and Authorities of Social Development of MERCOSUR, held in 2012, approved the [Project on Social and Solidarity Economy for Regional Integration](#), co-ordinated by MERCOSUR’s Social Institute (*Instituto Social del MERCOSUR–ISM*).

Among the project objectives is “the creation of **Promotion Centres for Social and Solidarity Economy**, with the physical infrastructure to support the production, commercialization and training of the enterprises involved within their areas of influence”. (*“Entre los objetivos del proyecto se encuentra la creación de **Centros de Promoción de la Economía Social y Solidaria** (CPESS), los cuales contarán con la infraestructura física para soporte y apoyo a la producción, comercialización y capacitación de los emprendimientos, en el área de influencia de los mismos”*).

At the first Meeting of Ministers and Senior Authorities of Women’s Affairs of MERCOSUR (*l Reunión de Ministras y Altas Autoridades de la Mujer del MERCOSUR–RMAAM*), held in 2012, it was agreed that the Technical Group on Gender, Work and Social Integration would include an additional line of work on **Social and Solidarity Economy**.

Pursuant to a proposal of the RMAAM, the Common Market Council (*Consejo del Mercado Común–CMC*) approved in 2015 a recommendation “Promotion of Women’s Enterprises of MERCOSUR and **Networks of Social and Solidarity Trade Fairs**. (*“Promoción de Mujeres Emprendedoras del MERCOSUR y Redes de Ferias de la Economía Social y Solidaria”*).

In 2015 the Common Market Council approved a [project](#) to support the MERCOSUR Social Institute, which aimed to strengthen data gathering, research, training and technical co-operation, under the Information System (SIMPIS) in several thematic areas, including **social and solidarity economy**.

Union of South American Nations *Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR)*

In 2010, the South American Council of Social Development of UNASUR organized the [Social Economy Forum](#) of UNASUR in Quito, Ecuador. The purpose of the forum was to facilitate the exchange of ideas among policy makers, academics and others interested in social economy, social protection and financial inclusion, and assess regional experiences and conceptual and practical innovations with a view to incorporating them in the process of public policy design.

In 2012 the Council approved the 2012–2014 [Action Plan](#). One of the five priority areas for action was “**Social, solidarity and/or communal economy** with productive inclusion and the promotion of opportunities”. (*“Economía social, solidaria y/o comunal con inclusión productiva y generación de oportunidades”*).

Specific actions under this area included:

- Quantitative and qualitative identification of actors;
(*Elaborar documento de identificación cuantitativa y cualitativa de actores;*)

- Render visible actors, practices, initiatives and values of the **social and /or communal economy**;
(*Visibilizar actores, prácticas, iniciativas y valores de la economía social y/o comunal*.)
- Strengthen tools for productive and financial inclusion and the generation of opportunities;
(*Fortalecer las herramientas para la inclusión productiva y financiera y la generación de oportunidades*;))
- Promote the development of a follow-up and evaluation system.
(*Promover el desarrollo de un sistema de seguimiento y evaluación*.)

A [working group](#) led by Argentina and Paraguay was established to co-ordinate work under this area.

The [2015-2017 Action Plan](#) retained the same priority area, emphasizing the key role of SSE in the struggle for equality:

[T]he member States of UNASUR consider it pertinent to foster the values that are promoted from the **social, solidarity, popular or communal economy**.... The aim is to achieve an alternative form of production, distribution, consumption and/or trade; an alternative where work is the articulating axis of public policies.... Policies of work integration or inclusion should be used in the region not only as actions for poverty reduction but also for improving the distribution of income and the promotion of social development; maintaining a special connection with the vision of the **social, solidarity, popular or communal economy**, which we propose should be prioritized regionally through public policy.

[L]os Estados miembro de la UNASUR consideramos pertinente impulsar los valores que se promueven desde la **economía social, solidaria, popular o comunal**.... Lo que se busca es lograr una forma alternativa de producir, distribuir, consumir y/o comercializar. Una alternativa donde el trabajo sea un eje articulador de las políticas públicas.... Las políticas de integración o inclusión laboral deben ser utilizadas en la región tanto como acciones para la reducción de la pobreza como para la mejora en la distribución de los ingresos y el impulso al desarrollo social; manteniéndose el especial vínculo con la visión de la **economía social, solidaria, popular o comunal** que para la región proponemos jerarquizar desde la política pública.

WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA REGION

League of Arab States

At the regional level the use of the concept Social and Solidarity Economy is fairly recent. In March 2017 the [Council of Arab Economic Unity](#) organized a two days [seminar](#) in Tunisia on the **Social and Solidarity Economy** (الاقتصاد التضامني والاجتماعي). The Seminar, which was organized in collaboration with the Arab Cooperatives Union and the National Union of Tunisian Cooperatives concluded with several recommendations and practical suggestions.¹ Importantly, the seminar concluded with a recommendation to the League of Arab States to incorporate SSE in all their development strategies and programmes.

In August 2017, SSE was put for the first time on the [Agenda](#) of the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League of States for discussion. It was brought to the attention of the Council of Ministers by the [Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia](#) as a potential mechanism to counter precarious work and support social integration in Arab countries. The Economic and Social Council in turn decided to refer the proposal to the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and the International Labour Organization for consideration. Subsequently for it to be represented to the Council of Ministers in their fore-coming session for further discussion.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission of West Asia (ESCWA)

In 2014, ESCWA published a policy brief titled [Social and Solidarity Economy as a Tool for Social Justice](#). The brief urges the acknowledgement of **SSE** and its potential as a tool for enhancing social justice in the region. It also provides policy recommendations on how to build a conducive environment to support SSE organizations.

Remarks on Initiatives at the National Level

At the national level Tunisia and Morocco have already established SSE strategy. Lebanon created an SSE platform working on a policy and legal framework for social enterprises, and other countries in the region, such as Jordan, among others, are at different stages.

¹ (i) How to raise SSE visibility, (ii) how to create, broaden and support SSE networks, and (iii) how to scale SSE up and realize its potential.

EUROPE

The European Union

The long march towards institutional and legal recognition of the social economy within the European Union (EU) stretches for more than three decades. Since the 1980s various EU institutions and legislative bodies have contributed, within their mandate, to the promotion of the social economy in the region and beyond². These include the European Commission (EC), the Council of the European Union (CoEU), the European Parliament (EP) and the European Economic and Social Council (EESC) among others. Growing support for social economy reflects the increasing recognition of its role in relation to employment creation, social service provisioning, local economic development and social cohesion.

The European Commission

A simple search in EU data bases found [440 documents](#)³ that mention the term “social economy” or “solidarity economy” or “social enterprise(s)” or “social entrepreneurship” in the body of the text.

Cooperatives, mutuals, associations and foundations have long featured in EU documents. The term “social economy”, however, was first identified and subsequently recognized as a “distinctive entity” within the EU in December 1989 with the publication of the European Commission (EC) [Communication](#)⁴ to the Council entitled “Business in the ‘**Economie Sociale**’ sector: Europe’s frontier-free market” [SEC (89) 2187]. The Communication defines the social economy as follows; “The hallmark of belonging to the sector is the specific manner of organization of an enterprise’s productive activity. The driving principles are the solidarity and participation (one member, one vote) of its members, whether producers, users or consumers, informed by proud independence and civic purpose” (4). The definition adopted by the EC mainly encompassed *legally recognized enterprises*.

enterprises in this sector are types of organizations that are legally recognized in all Member States, even though they may take different legal forms (**cooperative societies or association, mutual society or association, non-profit association, sui generis organization**), which themselves may fall within wider branches or private law (company law, associations) and sometimes make for particular management practices (5).

In the same year the EC sponsored the 1st European Social Economy Conference (Paris) and established a Social Economy Unit (SEU) within DG XXIII as the first specialized body on the social economy in the EU ([EESC, 2012](#)).

Throughout the 1990s the EC organized several European Social Economy Conferences in Rome, Lisbon, Seville and Brussels (EESC, 2012). Numerous European conferences have been held since then. In 1997, the EC launched the “[Third System and Employment](#)” (1997–2001) pilot action, with the **social economy** as its field of reference. The pilot scheme aimed to explore and subsequently promote the role of the social economy in local development and job creation.

² The first unit dealing with Social Economy in the European Commission was created under Commission Delors. ³ December 2017

³ December 2017

⁴ See also “[Opinion on the communication from the commission to the council—businesses in the ‘économie sociale’ sector Europe’s frontier free market](#)” (90/c 332/25)

In 2006 the EC published [the Manual for Drawing up the Satellite Accounts of Companies in the Social Economy, Cooperatives and Mutual Societies](#) with an aim to make it possible to obtain consistent, accurate and reliable data on the **Social Economy**, in particular, **cooperatives, mutual societies** and other similar companies.

More substantial engagement came in April 2011 with the adoption of the [Single Market Act I](#)⁵ (SMAI). The SMAI constitutes a series of measures to boost the European economy and create jobs with emphasis on **social entrepreneurship** as a new business model by which “societal concerns are taking precedence over the exclusive objective of financial profit”. In October 2011 the EC published the Communication [Social Business initiative](#) (SBI)⁶—Creating a Favourable Climate for **Social Enterprises**, Key Stakeholders in the Social Economy and Innovation. The initiative proposed a short term action plan to strengthen the role of **social businesses** in the Single Market and support the development of social enterprises. The plan contains 11 priority measures or actions organized around three themes, (i) making it easier for **social enterprises** to obtain funding; (ii) increasing the visibility of **Social Enterprises**, and (iii) making the legal environment friendlier for **social enterprises**. Within these three themes the EC has advanced several actions with particular focus on developing investment mechanisms among [others](#). Accompanying the Communication on SBI, the EC also published a [Staff White Paper](#) on setting up a favourable ecosystem to promote **social businesses** in the social economy and innovation. The paper highlights the actions already undertaken by the EU with regards to social entrepreneurship and outline the actions of third countries and international organizations in this regards.

In May 2012, the EC established the [multi-stakeholder expert group on social business GECES](#) to examine the progress and measures envisaged in the SBI. In October 2012, the EC published the communication [Single Market Act II](#) (SMAII), which set out a second set of actions to further develop the Single Market. The SMAII recognizes the **social economy** and **social enterprises** as “key actors to delivering social innovation, inclusiveness and trust”. The EC also committed to the “development of a rigorous and systematic measurements of **social enterprises**’ impact on community”. In response, the EC created in 2012 a GECES sub group to agree upon a European methodology to measure the socio economic benefits created by the social enterprises (as states in the SMAII). Since 2014, the GECES has adopted several reports produced by the GECES sub group (for further information and access to publications, please see [here](#)⁷). In 2016, the GECES published the call for action: [Social Enterprises and the Social Economy Going Forward](#). The report calls for the development of a European Action Plan that promotes an enabling environment for the social economy and social enterprises. Based on the recommendations of the expert group, the Commission decided early 2017 to set up an informal Task Force gathering more than 20 DGs that are working in projects dealing with social economy/social entrepreneurship. In particular, it discusses the implementation of the Communication “startup and scale up initiative⁸” which foresees dedicated actions for social economy/social enterprises under five different pillars⁹.

⁵ See also <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/smact/>

⁶ See also http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_en

⁷ Most notable is “[Proposed approaches to social impact measurement in European Commission legislation and in practice relating to EuSEFs and the EaSI](#)” (2014)

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/new-initiative-startups-start-and-scale-europe>

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/26812>

The EC also conducts studies independently and in partnership with the OECD in particular. In 2014 the EC published the result of their research project on [mapping the social enterprise and their eco system in Europe](#). The study, which constitutes part of the plan outlined in the SBI, allowed the EU to advance the following: (i) [create public database of labels and certifications applicable to social enterprises in Europe](#), and (ii) [help national and regional governments introduce measures to support, promote and finance social enterprises](#), among *others*. Other publications by the EC include a [recipe book for social finance: a practical guide on designing and implementing initiatives to develop social finance instruments and markets](#) (2016), [Social Economy and Social entrepreneurship](#) (2013), [Buying Social: A Guide to Taking Account of Social Considerations in Public Procurement](#) (2010). In January 2014, the EC co-organized with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the City of Strasbourg an interactive conference titled “[Social Entrepreneurs: Have Your Say!](#)” with the aim to evaluate the achievement and implementation of the SBI and identify future priorities for action among *others*. The conference concluded with the [Strasbourg Declaration](#) which affirms the importance of the **social economy** and **social enterprises** for Europe and subsequently “identifies new ideas and actions to unlock their potential for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. Many other conferences took place during the implementation phase of the Social Business Initiative¹⁰.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union

A simple search in the EU data base found [131 documents](#) published by the Council of the European Union and [345 documents](#) published European Parliament that mention the terms “social economy” or “solidarity economy” or “social enterprise(s)” or “social entrepreneurship”. In the 1990s, the [European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup](#) was established. In 1994 the European Parliament adopted the [Resolution on the Alternative, Social Economy \(OJ C 205\)](#) recognizing the vital, pioneering role alternative and social economy projects are playing in the countries of the European Union. In 2006, the EP “[Report on a European Social Model for the Future](#)” considered the **social economy**, which comprises cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations as one of the cornerstones of the European social model and a factor for development, sustainability and efficiency in the future. In 2009, the EP adopted the [Resolution on Social Economy \(2008/2250\(INI\)\)](#) ([see also the report on Social Economy 2008/2250\(INI\)](#)) in response to requests to better integrate social economy in EU policies and strategies. In article 21, for example, it recommends that “Member State support of **social economy enterprises** should be interpreted as a genuine investment in creating solidarity networks that can strengthen the role of local communities and authorities in developing social policies” ([REVES](#)).

In March 2012, the European parliament adopted the [Resolution on the Statute for a European Cooperative Society with regard to the involvement of employees \(2011/2116\(INI\)\)](#). The Resolution recalls that “cooperatives and other **social economy enterprises** are part of the European social model and the single market and therefore deserve strong recognition and support, as provided for in the constitutions of some Member States and various EU key documents”. It nevertheless also acknowledges that the “statute for a European Cooperative Society (SEC) is so far the only **social economy** legal form available at EU level, following the withdrawal of the Commission proposal for a European Association and a European Mutual Society in 2003 and given that the statute for a European Foundations is still under development”.

¹⁰ Conference in Luxembourg, December 2015 or in Bratislava, December 2016.

Since 2011¹¹, the EP and the Council have adopted several resolutions and published several council conclusions recognizing the **social economy**, in particular **social enterprises**, and the need for supportive ecosystems to support their development and realize their potential. In November 2012, the EP adopted the [Resolution on the Social Business Initiative \(SBI\)—Creating a Favourable Climate for Social Enterprises, Key Stakeholders in the Social Economy and Innovation \(2012/2004 \(INI\)\)](#). In April 2013, the EP and the Council adopted a regulation (EU) on [European social entrepreneurship funds \(EuSEF\) \(No 346/2013\)](#). The Regulation [aims](#) to “enhance the growth of social undertaking in the Union” by improving access to capital for **social entrepreneurship**. In December 2013, the European Parliament and the Council adopted the regulation on a “[European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\) and Amending Decision No 283/2010/EU Establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion.](#)” With a budget of approximately EU 920 million, this financial instrument [supports](#), inter alia, the programme on [Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship](#). In July 2013, the [European Parliament adopted Resolution on the contribution of Cooperatives to overcoming the economic crisis 2012/2321\(INI\)](#) recognizing the essential role that “cooperatives, along with other **social economy enterprises**, play [...] is the European economy, especially in time of crisis”. It also recognizes that “**social economy enterprises** should benefit from a clearer and more coherent legislative framework, taking due account of the wealth of diversity among social economy institutions” and their specific features.

In 2014, the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU organized the conference “[unlocking the potential of the social economy for EU growth](#)” in Rome, Italy. The conference concluded with the [Rome strategy](#) which affirms the vital role of the **social economy** in contributing to economic growth, employment, creation of retention, social cohesion, social innovation, rural and regional development, including international cooperation and development as well as environmental protection among others. The declaration also outlines key policy recommendations both to EU institutions and social economy actors with an aim to promote and scale up the social economy.

In September 2015, the European Parliament adopted the [Resolution on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in Combating Unemployment \(2014/2236\(INI\)\)](#). In December 2015 (3rd and 4th), Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU organized an expert focus conference titled “[Boosting social enterprises in Europe.](#)” with an aim to examine the ecosystem best suited to promote **social innovation and social enterprises**. The conferences concluded with the [Luxembourg Declaration—A Roadmap Towards a More Comprehensive Ecosystem for Social Economy Enterprises](#) signed by the Governments of France, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain. The signatories affirm the importance of the social economy as a vehicle for job creation and social innovation and outline several policy recommendations for the promotion of the social economy within the EU.

¹¹ The European Parliament recognized the social economy and called for its support in a number of reports, such as the [European Parliament resolution “Towards the statute of the European Cooperative Society with regard to employee participation”](#) (13 March 2012), the [European Parliament resolution on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis](#) (6 July 2011), the [European Parliament resolution on the Future of Social Services of General Interest](#) (5 July 2011), the [European Parliament resolution on a Single Market for Enterprises and Growth](#) (6 April 2011), the [European Parliament resolution on a Single Market for Europeans or the European Parliament resolution on Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries](#) (12 May 2011).

In December 2015, based on the recommendations of the Luxembourg declaration, the Council of the European Union [adopted](#) the “[Council Conclusion on the Promotion of the Social Economy as a Key Driver of Economic and Social Development in Europe](#)”(15071/15 SOC 711 EMPL 464). In this conclusion the Council invites EU member states and the EC to establish and further develop European strategies and programmes at the regional, national, and local levels for enhancing the **social economy** in four main area of intervention, awareness, recognition and education; social innovation, regulatory environment and; access to finance.

In March 2016, the European Parliament Directorate General for Internal Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy published the study “[Social Economy](#)”. In November 2016, the European Parliament published unbinding [Written Declaration on the Social and Solidarity Economy, \(0124/2016\)](#) calling the EC to “enhance its commitment to the **SSE** by supporting Member States in the provision of the following forms of assistance: institutional recognition, access to finance, awareness raising and public procurement policies”.

In December 2016, continuing the efforts done by previous presidencies of the Council of the European Union the Slovak Republic organized a conference on [social economy as a key player in providing effective answer to current societal challenges in the EU and the world](#), held in Bratislava. The conference concluded with the [Bratislava Declaration](#), which urged the EC to adopted the Action Plan proposed by the GECES and integrate it in its work programme.

In February 2017, the European Parliament (committee on Legal Affairs), Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, published the study “[a European Statute for Social and Solidarity Based Enterprise](#)”. The study outlines six recommendations about possible EU legislative initiatives on **Social Enterprises** in the form of a “European Social Enterprise”, to which the EU label of “ESE”, reserved for all European Social Enterprises, should be applied (p.37). Following the recommendations, the EP is currently working on a legislative initiative for a [statute for social and solidarity based enterprises](#), which would provide an opportunity to establish a broader EU level legal basis for various types of social economy sectors.

In May 2017, 11 member states—Bulgaria Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Romania and Spain—adopted the [Madrid Declaration](#), the outcome of the European Conference on “**Social Economy, an enterprise** model for the future of Europe”, co-organized by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security of Spain, Social Economy Europe and the Spanish Social Economy Confederation. Echoing the Bratislava Declaration, the Madrid Declaration calls on the European Commission to include in its working plan for 2018 a European Action Plan for the Social Economy 2018–2020, adequately financed, and strengthen the role of the social economy in the European Pillar of Social Rights and in ongoing debate on the future of Europe.

European Economic and Social Committee

A simple search found [272 documents](#) that mention the term “social economy” or “solidarity economy” or “social enterprise(s)” or “social entrepreneurship(s)” in the body of the text. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has contributed to the visibility of the social economy within the EU with successive opinions and initiatives since 1980s. In 1986 the EESC sponsored a European Social Economy Conference, together with the Coordinating Committee of the Cooperative Associations of the

Community (CCACC), and published the first European study on cooperatives, mutual societies and associations (see EESC, 1986). The EESC has been especially active in recent years issuing several Opinions and reports for instance, Opinion on “[Voluntary Organizations and Foundations in Europe](#)” (COM(97) 241), Opinion on “[the Social Economy and the Single Market](#)” (2000) (IJ C 117), Opinion on the “[Ability of SMEs and Social Economy Enterprises to Adapt to Changes Imposed by Economic Growth](#)” (2004), Opinion on the “Role of Social Economy in the Economic Diversification in the Accession Countries” (2004), Opinion on the “[Diverse forms of enterprise](#)” (2009), Opinion on the “[European Foundation Statute](#)” (2010), Opinion on “[What role and perspectives for Africa’s social economy in development cooperation](#)” (2010), Opinion on “[Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise](#)” (2011) (OJ C 24), Opinion on [communication of the European Commission “Towards a Single Market Act...”](#) (2011), Opinion on “[Proposal for a Regulation on European Social Entrepreneurship Funds](#)” (2012), Opinion on “[Social Business initiative—Creating a Favourable Climate for Social Enterprise, Key Stakeholders in the Social Economy and Innovation](#)” (2012), Opinion on [the Statute for a European Mutual Society](#) (2014), Opinion on [the role of cooperative and savings banks in territorial cohesion—proposal for an adapted financial regulation framework](#), 2014 (2015/C 251/02); Opinion of the EESC on [the “economy for the Common Good a sustainable economic model geared towards social cohesion”](#) (2016/C 013/06), Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on “[Innovation as a driver of new business](#)” (2016/C 303/04), Opinion of the European Committee of Regions on the [The Role of the Social Economy in Restoring economic growth and cohabiting unemployment](#) (2016/C 051/05). Recently EESC adopted Resolution on “[the European Economic and Social Committee contribution to the Commission’s 2018 work programme](#)” highlight the importance of the social economy EESC, [Building a financial ecosystem, for social enterprises](#) (2016/C 013/23). In 2017, it also published the Opinion on “[the External Dimension of the Social Economy](#)” (2017/C 345/09) to mention but few.

In addition to opinions and resolutions the EESC also organized conferences and seminars, launched projects and published reports. Between 2005 and 2014, the EESC organized several events, most notably: Definition and development of the **social economy** for a Europe of solidarity and competitiveness (2005), **Social economy enterprises: key players for growth and jobs** (2007), The role of the Social Economy in the provision of Services of General Interest (2008), [Getting to the End of the Tunnel: Creating the Right Environment for Social Economy](#) (2009), [Social enterprises and the Europe 2020 strategy: innovative solutions for a sustainable Europe](#) (2012), and [the EU policy agenda for Social Enterprise: What Next?](#) (2014). In 2014, following the Strasbourg conference, the EESC launched the Social Enterprise Project to “identify policy ideas and specific measures that can be taken”. As result of this process the EESC suggested key policy [recommendations](#) for action for the European Commission and for other Institutions. In 2015, the EESC organized the event [Social Enterprise Make It Happen! A Renewed Commitment](#) aiming to “give a synoptic view of the work which have been carried out by the EESC project group as well as to present the results”. This event also served as an opportunity to “renew the commitment taken after the Strasbourg Declaration and to promote, at the different levels, the development of a more favourable ecosystem for Social Enterprises in order to fully unleash the potential of the sector”. In [2007](#) it published the social economy in the European Union and an updated document in [2012](#). In 2017 it published the study [Recent Evolution of the Social Economy in the European Union](#) (2017).

The European Committee of the Regions

The [European Committee of the Regions](#) is one of the EU consultative bodies. It has been actively promoting the social economy within the EU since the late 1990s in relation to culture, tourism, employment, local development and social cohesion, among others. A Simple search in the EU data base found [76 documents](#) that mention the terms “social economy” or “solidarity economy” or “social enterprise(s)” or “social entrepreneurship(s)” in the title or the body of the text. In 1997 it published the opinion on “[the European Commission’s First Report on the Consideration of Cultural Aspects in the European Community Action](#)” (OJ C 116). The opinion points out that the “activities of the social economy organizations are particularly valuable as they build bridge between governments and citizens”. In 2002, it published the opinion on “[partnership between local and regional authorities and social economy organizations: contributing to employment, local development and social cohesion](#)” (OJ C192). In 2016, the Committee published the opinion on the “[role of the social economy in restoring economic growth and combating unemployment](#)” (2016/c 051/05).

The European Central Bank

In 2012, the European Central Bank published the Opinion on a “[proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council On European venture capital funds on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European social entrepreneurship funds](#)” (Con/2012/32). The ECB welcomes the proposed regulations, which in their opinion “will introduce uniform requirements for funds operating under a single, European designation and an identical substantive regulatory framework, while ensuring adequate supervision”. In 2016, it published Opinion on a “[proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Amending Regulation \(EU\) No 345/20133 on European venture capital funds and Regulation \(EU\) No 346/2013 on European social entrepreneurship funds](#)” (CON/2016/44), agreeing to the proposed Regulation to be amended.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

In 2013 the UNECE and the Croatian Ministry of entrepreneurship and Crafts jointly organized an international conference on “[Innovative Entrepreneurship—Making Things Work Better](#)” in Dubrovnik, Croatia, with an aim to promote innovative partnership, particularly in South East Europe. This conference was the first time that “**Social Entrepreneurship**” has been discussed at a UNECE conference. Until this point, UNECE were more engaged in the broader discussions about entrepreneurship, innovation and Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs).

In 2016, the UNECE and Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly organized an international course on “[Supporting Women Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development](#)”. Social entrepreneurship was discussed as one model among others that can promote gender equality and sustainable development.

INTERNATIONAL

International Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy (ILGSSE)

Established in 2014, the International Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy (ILGSSE) is a state-led platform for discussion and exchanges of best practices on SSE. It consists of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Greece, Luxembourg and Morocco as members and Quebec and Senegal as observers. The ILGSSE aims, in particular, [“to promote and encourage the development and implementation of public policies for SSE at local, national and international level”](#).

Since its establishment the ILGSSE has arranged a number of high-level events and adopted a number of declarations on SSE. In September 2015, the ILGSSE adopted the joint declaration [“Towards Public Policies Supporting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development”](#) at a side event organized during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. The declaration, which was adopted along with the United Nations Inter Agency Task Force on SSE (UNTFSSSE) stresses the importance of SSE, in the multiplicity of its forms, as a strategic means for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In July 2016, the ILGSSE (France and Costa Rica) have co-organized along with and the UNTFSSSE a joint [side event](#) in parallel with the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN headquarter in New York to discuss [“Social and Solidarity Economy as a Strategic Means of Implementation of the SDGs”](#). The side event highlighted **SSE** organizations’ potential to contribute to fundamental changes needed to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In September 2016, at a side event organized in parallel with the 71st session of the UNGA in New York, the ILGSSE adopted along with the UNTFSSSE and civil society organizations the declaration [“Social and Solidarity Economy \(SSE\): Strategic Means of Implementing the New Urban Agenda”](#) in view of the HABITAT III summit. In October 2016, at the [HABITAT III](#) summit in Quito Ecuador, the ILGSSE organized a side event to emphasize the transformative role of **SSE** for cities and urban economies. In September 2017, the ILGSSE organized a [side event](#) in parallel with the 72nd UNGA to discuss and “exchange on financing for **SSE** as social participatory and innovative levers to finance the SDGs”.

In addition to the events and declarations, in 2016, the ILGSSE committed to create three [working groups](#) to discuss three pre-identified priority themes for SSE related to legal framework, financial mechanisms, and impact measurement. The first concerns strengthening the legal frameworks for SSE both at national and international level. The second concerns financing of SSE organizations while the “third concerns the development of new wealth indicators to measure the impact of **SSE** on national and local economy, human development and sustainable development”.

Group of Twenty (G20)

The G20 is an international forum of governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies¹². Founded in 1999 with the aim of discussing “policy

¹² Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union

pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability”, the G20 held its first summit in 2008. has increasingly been bringing together other stakeholders from the private sectors and developing countries.

Since 2011, the G20 has been promoting inclusive business as a central strategy to achieve developmental, social and economic, objectives. The Inclusive business model is understood as a “private sector approach to providing goods, service and livelihoods on a commercially viable basis, either at scale or scalable, to people at the base of the pyramid by making them part of the value chain of companies’ core business as suppliers, distributors, retailers or customers”.

In [2015](#) the G20 (Turkish Presidency) introduced [its inclusive business framework](#) (see also the [annex](#)). The framework expanded its inclusive business approaches to include inclusive business activities and **social enterprise initiatives** and cooperatives. Building on EC and OECD definitions, social enterprises are initiatives that “have the mission to improve individuals’ and communities’ economic and social well-being and institutionalize the pursuit of explicit social objectives. A distinct feature of social enterprises is that they are not structured to maximize their profits for redistribution. Generally, most profits are reinvested back into the enterprise in order to fulfil and strengthen its social mission” (p.5). The G20 simultaneously issued a call to governments, the private sector, international organizations, international financial institutions, including multilateral development banks, and other stakeholders to consider the potential of Inclusive Business to advance inclusive growth and sustainable development, globally and nationally.

In [2016](#), the G20 (Chinese Presidency) launched the global platform on Inclusive Business (GPIB). Focused on policy, learning and implementation, the GPIB is a collaborative platform that engages the private sector, governments (both G20 and non G20) and other stakeholders such as the group of business associations (B20) to “connect policy makers and businesses behind a mission that is both pro-poor and pro-business”. In 2017, during a G20 meeting, the B20 taskforce on employment and education presented a [policy paper](#) that called on G20 governments to “promote **entrepreneurship** as a way to boost self-employment by reducing administrative burdens related to the creation of business, and by promoting a diversity of business models, including cooperatives, and other **social economy enterprises**” (34–35).

Group of Eight (G8) / Group of Seven (G7)

The G7 is an intergovernmental political forum comprised of major industrialized countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States. An expanded G8, comprising Russia, also met periodically until 2014 when Russia was excluded following the annexation of Crimea. The European Union is also represented in the Forum.

In June 2013, at the G8 Social Impact Investment Forum in London, the then British Prime Minister David Cameron announced the establishment of an international Social Impact Investment Task Force with the ambitious objective of “catalysing a global market in **impact investment**” in order to improve society. Social Impact investments are understood as those investments that “intentionally target specific social objectives along with a financial return and measure the achievement of both”

(p.1). The initial assumption behind such an approach is a that in order to build a “better society for all”, a “paradigm shift in capital market thinking” that moves from the narrow two dimensions of risk and return towards a third one that includes impact is required. Within this framework. social sector organizations, such as **social and solidarity enterprises** and cooperatives are perceived as impact driven businesses eligible for impact investment. In 2014, the **Social Impact Investment Task Force** published its report [Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets](#) alongside 13 country and issue-based reports with recommendations on how to move forward.

In August 2015, the G7 established the [Global Social Impact Investment Steering Group](#) (GSG) as the successor of the Social Impact Investment Task Force. The GSG works to “increase momentum by promoting a unified view of impact investment, facilitating knowledge exchange and encouraging policy change in national markets.... [I]t brings together leaders from the worlds of finance, business and philanthropy...as well as government officials and network organisations active in supporting the impact investment sector”.

Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF)

The [GSEF](#) is an international SSE network of local governments, SSE organizations and international organizations and foundations. It was initiated in 2013 by the Seoul Metropolitan Government to serve as a “hub for sharing visions,” ideas and experiences on the **social economy** “through cross-border collaboration and cooperation based on multilateral (public private community) partnerships”. Among its activities, the GSEF secretariat organizes global meetings ([2013](#), [2014](#), [2016](#)) policy dialogues for government officials from Asia ([2016](#), [2017](#)) and a Global Youth Camp for SSE (GYCSSE) ([2017](#)).

In 2013 GSEF adopted the [Seoul Declaration](#) following the first ever GSEF meeting, which was held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, under the theme “[New Discovery of collaboration](#)”. The declaration signatories, all have pledged to work together to promote the **Social Economy** and support its growth for a “better world” and a “better life” for “mankind”.

In 2016 GSEF adopted the [Montreal Declaration](#) following the GSEF2016 meeting in Montreal, co-organized by the City of Montreal, the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* and the GSEF secretariat under the theme “[Local Governments and Social Economy Stakeholders: Allies for the intelligent and sustainable development of cities](#)”. The signatories to the declaration affirm the importance of the **SSE** organizations to the development of sustainable and intelligent cities and assert SSE capacity to “overcome the current challenges and to promote a renewed participatory democracy” in all societies.

In 2017, the participants of the 1st GSEF Global Youth Camp for **Social and Solidarity Economy** (GYCSSE) adopted the [Declaration of the 1st GYCSSE](#). The signatories to the declaration emphasize the potential of SSE as a “source of imagination for [...] transformative action” that can transform the “economy and build a better and more equal societies”.

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)

Comprising 58 members and 26 observers, the [Association of Francophone Countries](#), the OIF, supports policies and actions promoting the French language, peace and democracy, education and research, and sustainable development

Following the election of Michaëlle Jean as Secretary General in 2014, the OIF has included SSE in its [programmes](#), recognising that the francophone countries seek to contribute to “the emergence of entrepreneurship and development through initiatives centred on the creation of employment in the **social and solidarity economy**, green economy, the cultural economy and the digital economy” (*«l'émergence de l'entrepreneuriat et au développement des initiatives de création d'emplois dans l'économie sociale et solidaire, l'économie verte, l'économie de la culture et l'économie numérique»*).

In collaboration with SSE associations and networks, the OIF has organized workshops on SSE, including an interactive debate on SSE as a means to support local economic development in Africa at the 4th World Forum on Local Economic Development, held in Praia in October 2017.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

In 1982, the OECD established the programme Local Economic and Employment Development ([LEED](#)) with the aim of analysing and promoting the role of entrepreneurship and innovation in economic and social development. The programme has carried out extensive research, capacity building and policy dialogue on [social economy](#) and [social entrepreneurship](#), which “plays an important role in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges while fostering inclusive growth, shared prosperity, and social inclusion. Moreover, social entrepreneurship contributes to job creation, especially at local level, as well as to democratic participation and improvement of welfare services delivery”.

From the late 1990s, in particular, the LEED programme broadened the traditional focus on entrepreneurship and the [non-profit sector](#) to include **social entrepreneurship and social enterprises**, respectively.¹³

In 2000, OECD LEED programme launched the [LEED Forum on Social Innovation. Created](#) by eleven organizations from six countries, the Forum has facilitated international dissemination and transfer of best policies and practices related to **social innovation and social economy**.

In 2003, a joint conference, held in Rome with the Forum on Cities and Regions on Entrepreneurship and Local Development in Distressed Urban Areas, analysed the role of **social enterprises** in revitalising distressed urban areas and in fostering enterprise. The subsequent report, [Entrepreneurship: A Catalyst for Urban Regeneration](#), paid particular attention to enabling policy developments in Europe and North America, including those supporting social enterprises.

Also in 2003, the [LEED Trento Centre for Local Development](#) was established as a collaborative effort between the OECD LEED programme and University of Trento in

¹³ See, for example, “[Fostering Entrepreneurship](#)” (1998) and “[Social Enterprises](#)” (1999).

Italy. The [Centre](#) aims to “contribute to improving social cohesion through the identification and dissemination of local innovations, identify and analyse the role of **social economy** in giving rise to new economic activities and creating new mechanisms of social cohesion”. Since its establishment, the Trento Centre has organized numerous capacity building activities.¹⁴ Drawing on the 2005 and 2006 conferences, the OECD published in 2007 [Social Economy: Building Inclusive Economies](#), “offer[ing] new insights into the economic theory of **social economy** organisations, their role in an evolving political and economic context, and the links to local development and the empowerment of users, present[ing] the main challenges for the **social economy** in Central, East and South East Europe [as well as] recommendations for action”.

The LEED programme also organizes conferences and dialogues with other partners, mainly governments, which aim to promote **social economy and social enterprises**, increase their public visibility and provide advice and support to governments on the best ways to scale up such practices.¹⁵

The project [Improving social inclusion at the local level through the social economy](#), initiated in 2009, “aimed to assist national, regional and local governments, and their partners at national and sub-national levels, to build their capacity to design and implement effective strategies for social inclusion and economic development with a particular focus on the **social economy**”. Outcome documents included country studies related to France, Poland, Slovenia and South Korea and [the 2014 synthesis report](#).

In 2011, LEED launched two projects in collaboration with the European Commission. The [project](#) “Job creation through social entrepreneurship and the **social economy**” aimed to identify and tailor policy relevant conclusions on “what factors contribute to, as well as those that hinder, [the ability of social economy organizations] to create and sustain jobs, particularly for individual and groups who confront difficulties on the open labour market” (see [report](#) published, 2013). Another LEED-EC initiative that assessed local development capacity related to employment creation and enterprise development in the [Western Balkans](#), included a focus on social economy.

The LEED continues to work in [collaboration](#) with the EC, particularly with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, on a number of projects that aim to “assess and provide tailored advice to individual or regional administrations of the EU Members States in the design and implementation of integrated policies and programmes for **social enterprises**”. In 2013, for instance, LEED launched the project [Boosting social entrepreneurship and social enterprise creation](#) (2013–2014) (report published [2017](#)). The project aimed to examine and analyse the

¹⁴ See, for example, [Social Economy and Social Innovation](#) (2004), and hosted numerous conferences, including [From Cooperatives to Social Enterprises](#) (2003); [The Social Economy in Central, East and South-East Europe: Emerging Trends of Social Innovation and Local Development](#) (2005, 2006).

¹⁵ See, for example, [Social Economy: The Leading Actor for Social Cohesion and the Lisbon Strategy](#) (2005); [Accompagner le développement de l'entrepreneuriat social](#), (France, 2006); [Social Enterprises in an Evolving Economy: From Non-Profit Organisations to Social Enterprises](#)¹⁵ (Romania, 2007); [Social Entrepreneurship](#) (Italy 2010); [Conference on social entrepreneurship in France](#) (France, 2012); [Potential of social enterprises for job creation and green economy - how to stimulate their start and development](#) (France, 2014).

conditions which have an impact on the **social economy** sector, particularly **social enterprises**, and identify the role which policy can play in supporting its development. A 2013 [policy brief](#) on social entrepreneurship in Europe noted that “[p]utting in place policies that provide an enabling eco-system for **social enterprises**, not only at start-up stage but also beyond, is crucial if these businesses are to fulfil their potential”.

In 2015, the OECD LEED launched the project “[stimulating social entrepreneurship and social innovation](#)”, in collaboration with the EC. The project analyses the conditions for the effective development of social enterprises, devoting particular attention to those that can foster social innovations in both the labour market and other policy areas, as well as stimulate local economic development. Overall, these collaborative projects aim to “contribute to Europe’s 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth while dovetailing with the European Commission’s Social Business Initiative for boosting **social entrepreneurship**”. Publications produced under this project include policy briefs on [social impact measurement for social enterprises](#) (2016) and [scaling the impact of social enterprises](#) (2016).

More recently, the OECD, in collaboration with the EC, produced a [compendium on boosting social enterprise development](#). Based on an analysis of 20 initiatives in several EU member-countries, the report provides policy lessons for boosting **social enterprises**, covering a range of areas from legal frameworks, finance, market access, and support structures, to education and skills. In depth policy reviews on boosting social entrepreneurship and social enterprise creation were also carried out and a set of new countries (Sweden, Lithuania, the Netherlands) will be analysed in 2018 and 2019.

An online tool for boosting **social enterprise** development due to be launched in fall 2018, is being developed in cooperation with the EC to provide an online assessment and learning environment for policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders who can influence and support the development of social enterprises. In addition to the publications and projects conducted by OECD LEED, the OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation has published a number of reports related to Social Finance, including “Social investment: [New Investment Approaches For Addressing Social And Economic Challenges](#)” (2014) and “[Social Impact Investment—Building The Evidence Base](#)” (2015).

Mercociudades

Founded in 1995, Mercociudades is the principal network of local governments of MERCOSUR, comprising representatives of 341 cities and towns in ten South American countries. Under its thematic area, Local Economic Development, the network created [the Social and Solidarity Economy Commission](#), which promotes knowledge sharing on good practices and co-ordination with relevant entities of MERCOSUR aimed at designing and implementing effective policies. In addition to organizing policy dialogues, the Commission sponsors research on **SSE** practices in member cities, supports a data bank and disseminates information on good practices.

Metropolis

Metropolis is a global network of 137 major cities and metropolitan areas. It serves as the “hub and platform for metropolises to connect, share experiences, and mobilize on a wide range of local and global issues”. Metropolis online platform facilitate city to city learning and policy transfer, including on issues related to the **social and solidarity economy**.

While the social and solidarity economy as a concept and a practice has long been recognized by members of metropolis in their individual capacity, little can be seen at the intuitional level, at least not until 2016. In 2016, during the GSEF conference in Montreal, [Metropolis Secretary General Felip Roca](#) closed the event with the message that “[m]ajor metropolises are forums of opportunities and development as well as the most visible face of inequality. This is precisely the reason why the link between local governments and the **social economy** can be the guarantee of citizen wellbeing. All of this makes cities the ideal place to develop the social economy and deliver a greater impact”. In June 2017, XII Metropolis World Congress held in Montreal hosted one training workshop and one session on the social economy. The training workshop titled Economic Development For Inclusive Cities: Combating Inequalities In Urban Regeneration With The Social Economy, gave details on projects being undertaken in four metropolises, namely Montreal, Seoul, Barcelona, and Johannesburg. The session titled the Social Economy in Montreal: An Ecosystem to Serve Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation and Living Together, provided a brief overview of the structures within the ecosystem that collaborate to support the creation and development of collective enterprises in Montreal, as well as the history of their development.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Created in 2004, [UCLG](#) is a global network of cities, local and regional governments. The association’s stated mission is to promote the “values, goals and interest of democratic, local self/government through cooperation between local and regional governments and with the wider international community”.

In 2010, the 3rd [UCLG Congress](#) concluding document titled “[The City Of 2030—Our Manifesto](#)” stated that the “city of 2030 will gear its economic development to the needs and technologies of the future, favoring a climate of enterprise for business of all sizes, and offering decent jobs”. Within this framework “**social and cooperative enterprises** [as well as] local public enterprises will be encouraged”.

In 2016, the 5th UCLG Congress concluding document titled “[Bogota Commitment and Action Agenda](#)” recommended fostering “communal, associative and cooperative ways of life in city neighborhoods [...]; and invest[ing] in **collaborative, social and care economies** [...] as a mean to eradicate inequalities”.

[In June 2017, UCLG contributed](#) for the first time to the [8th International Labour Organization](#) Academy on SSE public policies, held in Seoul. Focused on local economic development, UCLG shared its experiences with informality, strengthening urban-rural linkages, and the reinforcement of the organizational capacity of street vendors.

Also in June 2017, UCLG coordinated a peer learning event on **social and solidarity economy** in partnership with GSEF, CITIES, SCAN, and Metropolis. It aimed to allow local and regional governments to debate and share experiences on urban renewal in the perspective of social economy policy, which is closely related to SDG 8, Decent Work and Economy Growth, and SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities. Following this event, UCLG published [Vital Neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Cities: Power of Urban Transformation through Social and Solidarity Economy \(SSE\)](#) as part of UCLG Learning series.