



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

2012/2004(INI)

28.6.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on Social Business Initiative – Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation (2012/2004(INI))

Rapporteur: Małgorzata Handzlik

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Acknowledges that social businesses have the potential to be important drivers for innovation and, as such, to provide responses to the current social and economic problems and to contribute significantly to cross-border cooperation, thus supporting growth in the sector; encourages, therefore, the development of a supportive and streamlined regulatory framework that promotes the structural diversity of social business, answers to the specific nature of their activities and provides financial support better suited to social entrepreneurship and social businesses, in particular SMEs, thereby promoting their growth and sustainability;
2. Believes that accountable management processes, supported by funding mechanisms subject to proper monitoring and transparency, are necessary to retain the focus of social entrepreneurship and social business;
3. Highlights that the recognition of social businesses at the EU level should not be limited to including social objectives in certain commercial enterprises, but should also take into account the specific nature of each category of social business, particularly businesses in the social and charitable economy; emphasises that in order to do this, there is a need to adopt and implement funding tools that allow such businesses to carry out their activities in accordance with their own goals and objectives, and to foster solidarity between them; emphasises as well that better knowledge of social businesses, and a qualitative, multi-party and independent assessment of their activities, would enhance the contribution they make to society as a whole, and raise awareness about how social cohesion is a source of economic and social wealth and not just a cost;
4. Welcomes the proposal for microcredits in support of European SMEs;
5. Highlights the importance of the contribution of social businesses, in all sectors, to strengthening social cohesion and inclusion and to understanding and meeting the needs of consumers in general, and of vulnerable consumers in particular; stresses that social businesses, while primarily aiming to satisfy social and public policy needs, also strive to meet the growing demands of citizens for ethical behaviour that is more respectful of human beings, the environment, social standards and sociality;
6. Calls on the Commission to adopt measures aimed at raising the general public's awareness about the activities of social businesses and increasing its confidence in these businesses, and to encourage the general public actively to support this type of business;
7. Calls on the Member States to promote, encourage and develop social economy institutions by removing obstacles to starting and developing social businesses, promoting training and retraining in the field of social economy institutions, and increasing aid to entrepreneurs in social businesses;

8. Stresses that social businesses, by the nature of their activities and their modus operandi, help to build a more cohesive, democratic and ‘active’ society that contributes to job creation and sustainable and inclusive economic growth, notably by promoting solidarity and sustainability, social cohesion and inclusion, stable jobs of good quality, equal opportunities for men and women, and the reconciliation of personal, family and working life;
9. Considers that corporate social responsibility and ‘social enterprise’ are complementary aspects of the same policy and should consequently be developed in a coordinated manner, without duplicating the efforts made by Member States;
10. Is of the opinion that the reform of the EU’s public procurement rules provides a good opportunity to improve respect for social standards and to increase the participation by, and improve access for, social businesses in public contracts; welcomes the regime for social services included in the Commission’s proposal on the revision of the public procurement directives, and stresses the importance for local contracting authorities of this tool for providing quality services fostering social cohesion;
11. Notes the Commission’s proposal to add the new category of disadvantaged persons to reserved contracts; underlines the potential of the new provision on reserved contracts for fostering innovative social and territorial development while respecting the principles of the competitive awarding of contracts;
12. Asks the Commission to conduct a thorough impact assessment in order to develop a long-term strategy for safeguarding social and environmental goals and enhancing the participation of social businesses in public procurement, without hampering the competitive awarding of contracts and without creating incentives to circumvent the rules; asks the Member States to remove obstacles to starting and developing the economic activities of social economy institutions, particularly with regard to the implementation of administrative procedures;

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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| Date adopted | 21.6.2012 |
| Result of final vote | +: 27 -: 2 0: 2 |
| Members present for the final vote | Pablo Arias Echeverría, Adam Bielan, Sergio Gaetano Cofferati, Birgit Collin-Langen, Lara Comi, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Cornelis de Jong, Christian Engström, Evelyne Gebhardt, Malcolm Harbour, Toine Manders, Hans-Peter Mayer, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Robert Rochefort, Heide Rühle, Christel Schaldemose, Andreas Schwab, Catherine Stihler, Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Emilie Turunen, Bernadette Vergnaud, Barbara Weiler |
| Substitute(s) present for the final vote | Raffaele Baldassarre, Mario Borghezio, Simon Busuttil, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Laurence J.A.J. Stassen, Marc Tarabella, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Anja Weisgerber, Kerstin Westphal |