

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

2008/2250(INI)

4.12.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on Social Economy
(2008/2250(INI))

Rapporteur: Donata Gottardi

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs 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. Highlights the key role of the social economy in the achievement of the Lisbon goals of sustainable growth and full employment, because it addresses numerous imbalances in the labour market, in particular by supporting female employment, creates and provides welfare and proximity services (such as social, health and social security services), and creates and maintains the social and economic fabric by contributing to local development and social cohesion;
2. Considers that the social economy is important, in view of what it symbolises and the results it achieves, as a means of enhancing industrial and economic democracy;
3. Is of the opinion that the European Union should take action to establish a framework for the social economy agenda as this would strengthen local and EU competitiveness and innovation capacity, given the ability of the social economy to generate stability in a context of eminently cyclical economies, by redistributing and reinvesting profits locally, where appropriate, promoting an entrepreneurial culture, linking economic activities to the local needs, sustaining activities at risk (e.g. crafts) and generating social capital;
4. Stresses the importance of the social economy in relation to services of general interest, and highlights the added value created by setting up private-public integrated networks, but also the risk of their being exploited as a pretext for outsourcing with a view to reducing the costs borne by public authorities, including by having recourse to services provided by the voluntary sector;
5. Invites the Commission to integrate the social economy into its other policies and strategies designed for social, economic and enterprise development - especially in the context of the Small Business Act - as social economy structures providing socio-economic activities may be of particular interest to small and medium-sized enterprises and services of general interest; invites the Commission, therefore, to re-consider the possibility of reinstating a social economy unit;
6. Calls on the competent authorities and the operators in the sector to assess and enhance the role of women in the social economy, both in quantitative terms, given the high rate of employment of women in all fields of the sector, including associations and voluntary work, and as regards the quality and organisational aspects of work and service provision; is concerned about the persisting problem of vertical integration, even in the social economy, which limits the participation of women in decision-making;
7. Calls on Member State governments and local authorities and on operators in the sector to encourage and support the potential synergies which could be generated in the services sector by stakeholders in, and users of, the social economy by broadening the scope of participation, consultation and co-responsibility;

8. Urges the Member States to make provision for training projects involving higher education, university and vocational training courses designed to create awareness of the social economy and of business initiatives based on its values;
- 9 Takes the view that the European Union and the Member States should recognise the social economy and its stakeholders – cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations – in their legislation and policies; suggests that those measures include easy access to credit and tax relief, the development of microcredits, the establishment of European statutes for associations, foundations and mutual societies, as well as tailored EU funding and incentives to better support social economy organisations operating within market and non-market sectors, which are created for the purpose of social utility;
10. Considers that the removal of the proposals for a European Mutual Society Statute and a European Association Statute from the Commission's agenda has been a serious setback for the development of those forms of European company (SE) in the European Union and therefore urges the Commission to review its agenda;
11. Asks the Commission to establish a European think tank on co-operative banks and other financial services related SE organisations in order to conduct a study investigating how these specific SE entities have performed at EU level to date - in particular during the ongoing global credit and financial crises - and how they will avoid future risks in this respect;
12. Calls on the Commission to take account of the realities of the social economy when reviewing the policy on State aid, given that small businesses and organisations operating at local level encounter considerable difficulties in accessing funding, particularly during the current economic and financial crisis; also calls on the Commission not to obstruct national company law and fiscal provisions such as those applying to cooperatives in the banking sector and the distribution sector which operate on the basis of mutuality principles, company democracy, the intergenerational transmission of assets, the indivisibility of reserves, solidarity, the work ethic and business ethics.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	2.12.2008
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 0 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Mariela Velichkova Baeva, Paolo Bartolozzi, Zsolt László Becsey, Sebastian Valentin Bodu, Sharon Bowles, Udo Bullmann, Manuel António dos Santos, Christian Ehler, Jonathan Evans, José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil, Jean-Paul Gauzès, Robert Goebbels, Donata Gottardi, Louis Grech, Othmar Karas, Wolf Klinz, Astrid Lulling, Gay Mitchell, Sirpa Pietikäinen, John Purvis, Peter Skinner, Margarita Starkevičiūtė, Ivo Strejček, Sahra Wagenknecht
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Harald Ettl