

Social enterprises as an integral part of the fair, green and circular transition in Europe

A European Green Deal favourable for social enterprises

Every day in Europe, 2.8 million social economy enterprises employing some 19.1 million people are dedicated to solving societal challenges whilst running a sustainable business. All in all, this accounts for some 6.3% of the total paid workforce in Europe.¹ Unlike traditional businesses, social enterprises create revenues and profits that are directly re-invested into up-skilling, innovative jobs and training opportunities. By working towards an inclusive and circular economy with a vision for a more cohesive society, they create social and environmental value.

We, the undersigned welcome the ambition of the European Commission to invest in a green Europe and work towards a climate neutral Europe by 2050 through the proposed European Green Deal and Sustainable Europe Investment Plan. We commend the appetite to unlock 1 trillion EUR of climate-related investment which we believe has the potential for strategic job creation with social and environmental impact. Social enterprises trading for social or environmental purposes, offer business models to achieve our shared objective for lasting sustainable development. Notably, environmental services such as re-use, recycle, repair, and innovation or impact measurement can contribute. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission to invest in social enterprises to implement the European Green deal, and encourage sustainable, inclusive public procurement opportunities.

¹ European Economic and Social Committee (2017), Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union (Available [here](#))

A Green Europe with healthier consumer habits, workers' rights for an integrated transition

As Ms. Von der Leyen's political guidelines for the next European Commission's state, "climate change, biodiversity, food security, deforestation and land degradation go together. We need to change the way we produce, consume and trade." Indeed, the way we produce has caused much harm to the environment. According to the United Nations, 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress are caused by resource extraction and processing.² Social enterprise networks such as Euclid Network and RREUSE's expertise cover circular economy, environmental and social impact, clustered enterprises, inclusive jobs, all key areas for consideration under the new Commission. For example, developing the second-hand market by facilitating access to re-usable goods, designing more durable and repairable products, informing consumers about the impact of their consumption and integrating the related costs can be fed into the just transition.

A Social Europe where nobody is left behind

Finally, RREUSE, Euclid Network and Caritas Europa affirm a new approach to this transition. We look forward to a greener Europe which requires a high level of coordination and listens to all stakeholders in the Circular Economy and Social Economy. For example, by fully integrating the European Pillar of Social Rights in Circular Economy related policies³ and enhancing social innovation⁴ in Europe we reiterate the necessity to think global, invest local, social and sustainable ensuring that nobody is left behind.

RREUSE (the network of European social enterprises active in re-use, repair and recycling), Euclid Network (the European network of social enterprises & impact-driven leaders) and Caritas Europa (the network of Caritas organisations on the European continent) join forces to wish the new Commission a successful mandate in the transition for Europe towards a fair, green and circular economy. We believe the recognition of the role of social enterprises and social economy enterprises should be elaborated further in the European Green deal. Through support of the Social Economy in the green transition, Europe stands to be more inclusive, greener, sustainable and healthier. The European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0 will be perfect tools to integrate these proposals.

² United Nations (2019), Global Resources Outlook (Available [here](#))

³ Prevent Waste Coalition (2019) 10 Priorities to transform EU waste policy (Available [here](#))

⁴ 25 Social Enterprise Networks (2019) 7 Actions to enhance social innovation in Europe (Available [here](#))

For more information please contact

Elaine Hanlon
Policy Officer at RREUSE
elaine.hanlon@rreuse.org



***RREUSE** is an independent non-profit organisation representing social enterprises active in the field of re-use, repair and recycling, with 26 members across 24 countries in Europe and the USA.*

Our main vision is for Europe to support the role of social enterprise in a circular economy, providing meaningful work opportunities to thousands of vulnerable members of our community through innovative economic, social and environmentally beneficial activities.

RREUSE's primary mission is to help tackle poverty, social exclusion and a throwaway culture by promoting policies, best practices and partnerships that support the professionalism and development of social enterprises working in environmental services with high potential for local and inclusive job creation, notably re-use and repair.

Veerle Klijn
Programme Manager at Euclid Network
Veerle@euclidnetwork.eu



***Euclid Network** is a growing European network for organisations that support social entrepreneurs and impact-driven leaders.*

Our members are based in 20 countries and represent over 100.000 social enterprises throughout Europe and beyond. Together we are working towards an economy that works for people and the planet.

We are a strategic partner of the European Commission and an observer to the United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSE).

Euclid Network enhances the field of social entrepreneurship through knowledge exchange, capacity building, networking and international advocacy.

This statement is co-signed with

Caritas Europa



Microfinance Centre Poland

