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ETUCE Position on the

Proposal for a Council recommendation developing social economy framework conditions

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Background

Aiming to address such challenges as climate change, digitalisation, growing inequalities and demographic change, the European Commission looks at approaches to pioneer a fair, sustainable and inclusive transition. The far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and of the Russian aggression against Ukraine have made a transition towards a just and resilient society even more pressing. In this context, one of the areas that the European Commission would like to boost and support is **social economy** which includes the work of such entities as social enterprises, cooperatives, mutual-benefit societies, associations including charities, and foundations. The social economy is also affected by several horizontal and sectoral policies and provisions including those on social and labour-market policy, healthcare and care services, including childcare and care for other dependents, education, skills and training, etc.

With the view to support the social economy with a holistic approach, the European Commission published a new [Action Plan for the Social Economy](#) in December 2021. It proposes a **Council recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions** to be adopted in 2023, to support Member States in adopting more consistent and comprehensive measures for social economy in several policy domains (e.g. social services, education and skills, State aid, public procurement, taxation, social innovation); developing cross-government approaches for social economy; and building the capacity of public authorities. On the 18 August 2022, the European Commission published a [Roadmap](#) on the proposed Council Recommendation which is opened for public comments until 30 September 2022.

The following position represents the viewpoints of ETUCE* and its member organisations regarding the upcoming Council recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions, in particular regarding the education and training sector policies.

1. ETUCE welcomes the support that social economy entities could provide in the education and training area, especially regarding **social inclusion of disadvantaged groups**, and provision of equal opportunities for all, and delivering on the green and digital transitions. Cooperation between education institutions and social economy entities provides opportunities for addressing the needs of various social groups, including migrants, ethnic minorities, students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, etc. It also contributes to acknowledging, supporting and celebrating diversity among children,



students, teachers, academics, school leaders and other education personnel. As highlighted by [ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#), collaboration with organisations in the local community and civil society (including social economy entities) could provide support on teaching and practicing democratic citizenship and values-based education.

2. ETUCE also welcomes the contribution of the social economy to the **education for environmental sustainability** providing the opportunities for going outside of the educational institution and practicing the green skills and competences focusing them on the needs and specificities of the local community and fitting into students' personal situations, creating stronger ties between [education institution and local community](#). Social economy is also beneficial for implementation of a holistic view of sustainability and SDGs in education and training taking all dimensions of sustainability, economic, social, cultural and environmental, into account to implement sustainable development.

3. ETUCE agrees with the European Commission's evidence that *'social economy business models, including the cooperative forms, are still far from being a standard component in all entrepreneurship education curricula and business courses'* while ETUCE [believes](#) that **entrepreneurship education needs to be considered in the context of the overall social** – and not only business – environment. However, ETUCE highlights that in order to develop entrepreneurship in its widest sense, it is crucial to invest long term in initial training and continuous professional development of teachers who need to possess the skills and use the appropriate methodologies.

4. Despite of clear benefits of social economy for the education and training sector, ETUCE reminds that quality inclusive education is **a fundamental human right and a public good** as enshrined in the first principle of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), and therefore, is a **direct and full responsibility of the state and education public authorities**. The social economy should not become a substitution or 'cheap alternative' to public education and training, For example, there is a great risk of governments trying to fill the gap of affordable and accessible early childhood education and care provision with social economy services). Likewise, making use of social economy entities to support digital transition in education and training should not substitute the provision of teachers and other education personnel in public education with free access to digital tools, IT equipment, relevant training and adequate technical support. **ETUCE supports the uptake of sustainable and socially responsible public procurement** by governments and public buyers. ETUCE calls on the European Commission to implement guidance and financial opportunities to facilitate the use of these responsible procurement practices and to revise accordingly the existing European Directives (namely 2014/24/EU).

5. ETUCE also underlines that social economy entities must be **accountable** before the society and key stakeholders in education and training, including social partners, and Member States' support for the social economy should not lead to public budget cuts and austerity measures. As highlighted in the [ETUCE Position](#) on "A new framework for the Implementation of the European Education Area 2021-2030", it is imperative that **sufficient, sustainable and predictable public investment in public education** is boosted to ensure a fair, sustainable and inclusive transition towards a just and resilient society in Europe. It is also crucial to have clear accountability and monitoring mechanisms created within the social economy to **avoid the risks of exclusion and inequality**, when only some 'socially approved' disadvantaged groups would be supported and not others.

** The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 127 Education Trade Unions and 11 million teachers in 51 countries of Europe. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of education trade unions.*