

## Joint Declaration of the Member Regions of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission

# For a social and solidarity-based Mediterranean

Palermo, 17 October 2019

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The Member Regions of the Intermediterranean Commission, gathered for their General Assembly, have drawn the conclusion that:

- Each Mediterranean region handles and conceives the social and solidarity economy differently, as much in the way it is defined and the criteria used to specify who belongs to it, as in its history, legal framework and type of structures it embodies. These differences can be explained by the diversity of political, legal and economic contexts, and each country's and region's cultural and historic traditions. They are what constitutes the richness and complexity of the social and solidarity economy in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup>
- Drawing on these differences, the Mediterranean regions share a common and global vision of the social and solidarity economy, which is less defined by governing bodies statutes than as a mode of production, consumption, funding and alternative accommodation that differentiates itself from the conventional market economy by its social purpose and by putting the human element above capital.
- The culture of solidarity, mutual aid and collective work, which form the basis of the values and principles of the social and solidarity economy, has always been part of local communities' traditions and practices in Mediterranean countries.
- Because it is a local economy deeply rooted in the territories, the social and solidarity economy contributes strongly towards quality job creation, social cohesion, social innovation, local development and environmental protection, which are all objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, of the EU Territorial Agenda 2020 and sustainable development objectives of Agenda 2030. It creates added value and direct and effective solutions for territories and citizens.
- Because it combines the economic and social dimension with specific rules and innovative methods, the social and solidarity economy has proven to be especially resilient in the face of economic crises and currently employs 14 million people in Europe.
- Due to its typology, the social and solidarity economy offers interesting development opportunities in application to the areas of the blue economy and the circular economy, particularly in island territories.
- Four out of the five countries in Europe with specific legislation on the social and solidarity economy are in the Mediterranean (France, Spain, Portugal and Greece). A bill on the social and solidarity economy is also being drafted in Tunisia. This demonstrates the interest, recognition and momentum of this sector in our regions.
- Despite a rapid and significant development in the Mediterranean, there is currently no EU policy allowing a clear and common legal framework to be applied to social and solidarity economy activities. This lack of overall recognition at European level is mainly reflected in the fact that there is no specific dedicated funding. This certainly hinders the development of the social and solidarity economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

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### <sup>1</sup> References:

- Prospecting Report of the CPMR-IMC "Social & Solidarity Economy in the Mediterranean Regions: Experiences of territories and opportunities for cooperation" – 06.2017
- Mastalka Report of the European Parliament setting out recommendations to the Commission on a statute for social and solidarity-based enterprises – 27.06.2018

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Therefore, the Member Regions of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission conveys to the European, Euro-Mediterranean and international institutions, and the Mediterranean stakeholders that they:

1. Deem that the social and solidarity economy is a real lever for territorial development, a value-creating residential economy that provides solutions to local needs through innovative approaches.
2. Call for a system to be set up at European and Euro-Mediterranean level for the recognition and cross-cutting reference of the social and solidarity economy, which will showcase its specific modes of production and organisation and help to develop a favourable and sustainable legal and financial ecosystem for its businesses.
3. Welcome the European Parliament report setting out recommendations to the Commission on a statute for social and solidarity-based enterprises (2016/2237 (INL)) presented on 27 June 2018. The introduction of a more consistent legal framework for these companies, based on a set of distinctive common criteria at European level, would indeed allow them to optimise their positive impact on growth and jobs.
4. Emphasise the need to raise the profile of the social and solidarity economy in Europe and in the Mediterranean in order to spark interest and give policy makers, businesses, investors and citizens more knowledge about its specific characteristics and added value.
5. Stress the need to carry out awareness-raising actions on the principles and values of the social and solidarity economy, especially among young people, notably by encouraging its inclusion in academic and professional education and training programmes and activities. In this regard, awareness-raising, training and capacity building in these principles and values for public administration executives is an absolute pre-requisite.
6. Underline that Regions have the capacity to respond to economic development challenges, based on realities within their territories and an understanding of their citizens and their needs. They are thus at the heart of the values and principles of proximity, local attachment and innovation that are specific to the social and solidarity economy. The general feeling is that it is essential to recognise and take into account, at European level, the voice of regional and local authorities and their special role in developing the social and solidarity economy.
7. Ask for the development of the social and solidarity economy in European strategies and programmes to be the subject of a constructive dialogue between the relevant EU and Euro-Mediterranean institutions (in particular the Union for the Mediterranean), local authorities and social and solidarity economy players.
8. Stress the importance of exchanging experiences and good practices between social and solidarity-based enterprises and supporting the continuation of European programmes accordingly, such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs.
9. Call for social economy entrepreneurship to be further stimulated in the next European multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027, mainly through financial instruments adapted to small businesses of the social and solidarity economy. This in line with the conclusions of the European Commission pilot project on innovative financial instruments in support to the social economy.
10. Ask for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), as well as the Funds for Mediterranean cooperation, to provide bigger sources of financing to develop social and solidarity economy projects within the territories under the next programming period 2021-2027. The social and solidarity economy should thus be considered as a priority within the "Smarter Europe" objective, in the INTERREG MED and Mediterranean Cross-border Cooperation Programmes, as well as in the new regulation establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).
11. Reaffirm the social and solidarity economy's potential to strengthen economic and social cohesion, and their common willingness to enhance and support its development to build the social, solidarity-based and sustainable Mediterranean of tomorrow.