



RTES conference

Local authorities and the social economy in France: Converting the try

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Two years after the adoption in France of a framework law assigning general interest missions to the social economy, how do local authorities contract social economy enterprises and what policies have they implemented for the social economy?

Some 50 mayors and policy-makers from major French cities involved in social economy support participated at a [RTES \(Réseau des collectivités territoriales pour une économie solidaire / Local authorities for the social economy\)](#) meeting in Paris on 12th May.

Several topics and issues were presented and discussed:

- Some recent work analysing a social economy model focusing on sustainable local development, to make social economy enterprises a "joint" resource production mode and create a pool of local development players and on the links between social economy, circular economy and sharing economy.
- Presentations of local government social economy policies (mostly in cities or *départements*), the objectives of which are to: address social needs that are poorly met in the current market or public budget conditions; improve the supply of social or environmental services (housing, energy transition and waste recycling); and improve contractual and legal procedures to organise socially responsible public procurement.
- For local authorities, the EU means above all complex and burdensome regulations for public procurement, grants or state aid ([Almunia package](#) and March 2014 directives, for example) and [Services of General Economic Interest \(SGEIs\)](#). Several presentations by lawyers recalled the criteria; they clarified the procedures for implementing these rules and specified interventions outside European regulations (responsible purchasing, integration clause, local impact, [de minimis rule](#), etc.).

Many cities are implementing mechanisms to support SGEIs (social inclusion, housing, waste recycling, renewable energy, etc.) that are produced by social enterprises through public calls for proposals. They require the introduction of new modes of governance that were discussed: transversal relations and coordination between departments, the role of legal services, new tools for evaluation and conditions for joint local policies with social economy networks, etc.

- In this context which generates many social innovations, particularly around the new SGEIs, the contributions of various national networks were presented: RTES, of course, but also regional Social Economy Chambers (CRESS) and UNADEL (*Union nationale des Acteurs du Développement Local*).

For European transnational cooperation on social economy issues, AEIDL, which coordinates several EU cooperation schemes, shared its views with this dynamic network of local authorities, including three EU networks and projects in the field of social economy and social innovation:

- i) The [ESF Transnational Platform](#) (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). Ten thematic networks dedicated to transnational cooperation have been agreed with national management authorities. They aim to share information, innovation, experience and good practices, and to network partners to implement joint transnational ESF-funded projects between beneficiaries. A website will open soon. One of these ten themes concerns social economy. It is led by Poland and started in January. A first seminar comparing financial tools for the social economy was held in Warsaw on 19 and 20 May. More information on www.socialeconomy.pl or through [Dorotea Daniele](#).
- ii) The [Social Innovation Europe \(SIE\)](#) initiative, which was launched in 2011. DG Enterprise and Industry has contracted a consortium associating AEIDL and [SIX](#) (Social Innovation eXchange, UK), with [Euclid Network](#), [Young Foundation](#), [EMES](#), [Nesta](#), [Groupe SOS](#), [Partners Albania](#) and the [Danish Technological Institute](#). The purpose of SIE is to build operational links with most of the organisations involved in the analysis and promotion of social innovation in Europe. This initiative will be completed in July 2016, but will be partly taken over as part of a larger project, Social Innovation Community - SIC, which has just started.
- iii) A DG Research / Horizon 2020-funded network, [Social Innovation Community \(SIC\)](#) , coordinated by AEIDL, started in February 2016. Its purpose is to connect socially innovative actors into a number of virtual communities to strengthen the basis for further innovation. The SIC platform will be online shortly. SIC consists of ten thematic networks, one of which will focus on social economy. It will be led by a consortium of partners – European social economy networks like [REVES](#), universities, foundations and innovation centres. Another network will focus on social innovation related to cities and regional development. A [launch event](#) and a summer school will be held in September (more information: [Armelle Ledan](#) or [Patricia Martinez](#)).

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