

Social Firms Europe CEFEC Management Report

November 2020 – June 2021

Orientations and Objectives concerning the organization and internal activity of CEFEC

During the period between the 29th of October 2020 – our last Executive Committee (EC) meeting online - and the upcoming meeting on 23rd of June 2021, the small management group that takes care of the daily continuity of the CEFEC's activities, composed by Alina Birsan (Technical Secretary), Vasi Gafiuc (General Secretary), Christiane Haerlin (Senior Consultant and former president) and Felicitas Kresimon (development manager and current president), in cooperation with all our members involved in initiatives, working groups and in general activities of development and exchange, has continued its work aimed to increase the involvement of our members and the activities of our network.

Thanks to the use of digital communication tools and the great availability found in a very large majority of the members, it was possible to realize more than 50 meetings, followed each one by intensive email exchanges, minutes and other follow up communications:

- 11 meetings between the management group members
- 10 meetings with single and new members and for strengthening the EC
- 15 meetings with groups of members: working group activities, preparation of events, webinar, informal executive meeting and meeting between individual members
- 15 meetings with other networks: conference preparation, exchange and first contact, common activities linked to the EU Commission, as e.g. linked to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

1. Strengthening the Executive Committee

One of our important and fruitful activity, started already in October 2019, has been the commitment of strengthening the Executive Committee, with the aim to ensure continuity in the presence and representation of each partner country, creating stronger synergies and complementarity.

Nowadays we can welcome 31 instead of 21 members on our board, on behalf of 16 countries, most of them represented by 2 Executive Committee Members. And we will propose to include a 17th country, *Slovenia*, already present through 2 new and active member organizations in our Network, UPI and CPU.

In order to increase the awareness about the "both sides benefit" between CEFEC and its board members, starting from the month of July 2020 we submitted a *questionnaire* to all board delegates. Expectations, possible contributions, intention of involvement in some of the working groups, were questions on which we asked your opinions and indications.

→ *The report with the results, will be presented by the secretary during the EC Meeting in order to share ideas and improve cooperation between members*

2. Working Groups

One important tool for the active participation of our members is concerned to the involvement in our currently **7 Working Groups**: **4** of them more structured and characterized by regular assignments (Heritage, Linz Appeal, Award and EDF collaboration), the other **3** treating topics referred to main challenges for our European communities and priorities for our Network activity.

International cooperation, migration and green economy, are the three topics we want to develop further. Specially during the last month, the **Green Economy working group** set up the basis for an important collaboration and exchange of knowledge. We could appreciate the results during the first Webinar on the 24th of March 2021, part of our annual online conference.

Furthermore, after CEFEC Statute changes in 2020, the **international working group**, is planning a direct involvement of CEFEC members in a project promoted by Circle, through our EC Member Umberto Carrescia, in Tanzania.

About all this, as well as the important work of our member Meto Salijevic regarding the CEFEC **Heritage**, we will have specific insights.

The overall wish is to create opportunities to be active on our common issues, to make the WGs more effective, using also the tools and opportunities like online cooperation, successfully experienced during this last challenging year.

→ *The short deepening paper with the updated Working group members, will be sent by the secretary.*

3. Projects

Contribute to the large participation on Projects, has been another of our important activities. This aspect is considered essential for at least two main objectives:

- the connecting and networking between CEFEC members and other actors, active in common project fields
- the creation of a "holistic added value" through the realization - and therefore the "translation" of our values and our mission - into concrete activities and best-practices.

From October 2020 to today, by connecting members with common activities, CEFEC supported several new applications, mostly referred to the currently EU challenges: inclusion linked to digitalization. A third priority focused by EU funding is the challenge of sustainability and green economy, an opportunity also to further enhance our work on this priority.

→ *The updated projects report is presented by the secretary.*

4. Annual Conference

As you know, the original idea was, to realize the **35th annual conference** at Brussels in order to highlight our strategy of increasing CEFECs voice on EU level, valorizing our strong approach on "grassroot" activities and connecting CEFEC with other EU Networks. Hence the idea to base the conference on three pillars, represented by three European networks:

- **SFE CEFEC** representing mostly social enterprise organizations
- **REVES** European network of cities and regions for the social economy which connects Public Authorities to the approach of Social Economy
- **ECFI** European Community Foundation Initiative/**Dafne** and **Assifero**

Transferring the conference online, we could safeguard this idea, by realizing the following three Webinar, under the overall title “**Social economy stimulating the transformative potential of communities**” and with a special focus on rural and urban areas:

The **1st webinar**, “*Employment and Growth – Green Economy for improving employment*”, took place on **24 March 2021** and was organized by Social Firms Europe CEFEC, with an important investment of our Working Group Green Economy.

The **2nd webinar** has been organized by REVES network on **16 April 2021**, with the topic “*Participatory co-design of development strategies in rural and peripheral areas*”.

The **3rd webinar**, “*Unlocking the potential of local action for global good – Foundations supporting local social economy for 2030 Agenda*”, has taken place on **28 April 2021**, organized by Assifero and Dafne – Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe, in cooperation with ECFI – European Community Foundation Initiative.

Each topic has been discussed under three different points of view/pillars involving as well representatives from the EU Commission in order to create an opportunity of direct feedback.

All materials, including recordings, are available through our Website:

<https://socialfirmseurope.eu/2021-conference/>

The **36th annual conference 2022**, is planned to take place in Lithuania, organized by our EC member Asta Jaseliuniene.

→ *a first draft will be presented during the upcoming ECM*

5. CEFEC Academy

During the last month, we continued to work on the idea to build up the “**CEFEC ACADEMY**”, conceived for the first time together with **Klaus Hertrampf**, former EC Member, who, for our great sadness, passed away too early, on 7 September 2020.

The Academy aims to be a resource for multi-stakeholder collaboration and for the sharing and dissemination of ideas, knowledge and practical solutions. It will be a space for sharing both practical experience and theoretical knowledge and will encourage participants to innovate and evolve working practices throughout the field of social enterprise.

Our Webinar on March 2021, our active participation on the SEPAL project with learning sessions on Social Enterprise, the application for an Erasmus+ project in May 2021 and the prospective of a presence Academy session on green economy, with an important contribute of the WG 7 in October, are initiatives aimed to give shape to this idea.

→ *The concept will be sent by the secretary*

Orientations and Objectives concerning communication and networking activities of CEFEC

Despite the difficult situation which forced us to significantly reduce the activities of presence meetings, we continued with a large networking and communication activity. Both, with the aim to enhance our internal connecting activity, as well as the one centered on increasing our voice on European level, through the cooperation on our topics and mission with other European actors.

1. Networking, inside and out

The common work with **ENSIE**, European Network of Social Integration Enterprises <http://www.ensie.org/>, RREUSE <https://www.rreuse.org/> and CEC, <http://www.cecasbl.org/fr/>, SFE CEFEC, started during summer 2020, continued with an important activity of common statements and awareness rising activities towards the European Commission and National European Governments. Through a direct connection with the European Commissioner Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, we could interact with some EU Commission members and give the opportunity to our members to express needs, obstacles and challenges inherent to the access to the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**, part of the program *NextGenerationEU*.

This, with the aim to support Social Economy actors and social enterprises engaged with the challenge to create a more inclusive, sustainable and just rebuilding of our communities, especially during the current crises.

→ *The document has been sent to all members at the beginning of march 2021*

As you know, CEFEC participated on the most important European meeting for social economy **European Social Economy Summit - #EUSES at Mannheim** on 26 and 27 May 2021. The summit sets the focus on “*Social Enterprises in Europe - strategies and innovation for employment and inclusion*”

On 26 May, Social Firms Europe CEFEC participated with the session “*Social Enterprises in Europe - strategies and innovation for employment and inclusion*”, organized by Felicitas Kresimon (2020/2021 CEFEC President), Umberto Carrescia (CIRCLE Association / Italy), Richard Mehmet (Community Wood Recycling / UK) and Petru Vasile Gafiuc (CEFEC General Secretary).

For those of you who didn't manage to participate at the summit, you can find some videos and speeches from the event following this link: <https://www.euses2020.eu/media-library/>

Beside the numerous opportunities of exchange, the main output of #EUSES is the **Mannheim Declaration on Social Economy**, which identifies the needs to strengthen the Social Economy in Europe. <https://www.euses2020.eu/mannheim-declaration/>

As a result of our cooperation within the social economy movement across Europe, working on sustainable development, quality jobs, green deal, inclusion and fight against poverty is incorporated in EU policies, in April 2021, SFE CEFEC contributed with a proper **Position Paper** on the **European Action Plan for the Social Economy**, a leverage for the Economic and Social Recovery of Europe. The plan should be approved within 2021 by the European Commission.

→ *The document has been sent to all members at the end of April 2021*

We want to mention also the online event on 24 February, part of the **Erasmus+ project Digi4se**, which focused on the **European Pillar of Social Rights the #EU** and has been attended by more than 15 SFE CEFEC members. The EPR welcomes the launch of the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Commission on 4 March 2021. The Action Plan is a window of opportunity aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals to take firm steps in the implementation of the Pillar. This shows a political willingness to work with a more global perspective and towards meeting the SDGs 2030 Agenda goals.

With the European Pillar of Social Rights the #EU has promised its citizens a lot. For example, equal opportunities, access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection or social inclusion.

Does it actually work - for example in vocational training? What are the benefits for the training of unemployed people or employees in social enterprises? Some of the questions Caritas Europa tried to answer to during this meeting.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

Finally, thanks to *Klaus Meyer zu Brickwedde*, one of our CEFEC board members and referent for the cooperation with EDF, we could attend some event organized by **EDF** European disability forum <http://www.edf-feph.org/> and, submit a written position for the **General Comment on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment**, promoted by the CRPD.

→ *The paper "Inclusive Employment in Social Firms - How Social Firms in Europe are realizing the Inclusive Employment of People with Disabilities in Accordance with Article 27 of the UNCRPD" has been published on the following Website:*
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/GeneralDiscussions.aspx>

2. Communication activity

Daily communication activity

A large communication and information activity have been guaranteed continuously by our secretary. Among this:

- website updating
- editing of our newsletters
- promotion on Facebook profile

Webinar

On 19 November 2020 took place successfully the first Webinar "SFE CEFEC - strengthening cooperation between Nordic and Baltic countries".

The webinar, attended by 29 persons, was moderated by our EC member Jukka Lindberg from Vates Foundation, Finland and was broadcasted live on the CEFEC Facebook page.

Jukka Lindberg, supported also by Asta Jaseliuniene (Lithuania) and the managing group, it was possible to involve participants from 11 countries: Finland, Lithuania, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Latvia, Denmark, Romania, Netherlands, Italy and Greece.

The aim was to enhance the activities between members and other actors of social economy on these areas, with the wish to explore new possibilities of collaboration and common strategies on shared aims. Indeed, follow up events are in planning.

→ *you can follow the registration just here:*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELiTxhP99us&ab_channel=BIICT

Development objectives 2021 and Conclusions

Finally, find the updated **development objectives**, we fixed for 2021:

1. enlarge our network including other countries with quality members: minimum 3 new countries and 6 members
2. increase the direct communication with EU bodies and get recognition of our work: Beside the conference which had to take place online, organization of 1 CEFEC Seminar at Brussels, participation at the development of important EU Goals as Action plan for Social Economy, 2 Webinars
3. increase international cooperation by facilitating projects and partnerships: involvement in at least 6 projects
4. enhance the support of CEFEC members in their local strategical activity: minimum 3 Study Visits in our partner countries
5. acquire resources to support the CEFEC Secretary work
6. continue the focus on creating inclusive jobs inside the green economy sector: "CEFEC has concentrated on special best practice material for seminars and supporting S.F. how to create more jobs by means of green energy structures"

During the 34 years from its constitution, CEFEC has gone through several stages of development. Our common and current challenge is to enhance and support the present moment characterized by the presence of strong motivations and skills, useful for consolidating and developing our activities, aimed at creating inclusion, solidarity and social cohesion. This while maintaining an approach, capable of connecting engagement in our communities with the contexts of political decisions at local, national and EU level.

Let us finally highlight, the high level of motivation we found in all our members involved in specific activities, but also in the considerable commitment to face this unusual and complex period. Not only a personal challenge, but also challenging for our organizations but, nevertheless, also a significant driver for all the energy contributed to continuously develop our common network activity.

Thank you for all this and we wish a good summertime to all of us!

Felicitas Kresimon, Vasile Gafiuc, Alina Birsan and Christiane Haerlin