

REVES Annual Conference 2016

Regions and alternative markets for a social, sustainable and citizen-driven Europe

“Regions&alternative markets for a social, sustainable and citizen-driven Europe” was the title of a series of events linked to the REVES annual conference which was held on 13 and 14 April 2016 in Tulln (AT).

The events were hosted by goodworks (AT) and co-organised by the latter and REVES.

Approximately 130 participants representing cities/regions, social economy structures and other civil society initiatives, universities and national authorities from 20 EU Member States, but also EU institutions, consultative bodies and other European and international networks attended the conference.

For the different sessions goodworks and REVES had mobilized more than 30 speakers presenting innovative practices and policies in order to feed interactive discussions on a variety of topics, such as labour market integration, sharing economy, social public procurement, communication and marketing of social economy enterprises, green jobs, health or EEIG (European Economic Interest Groupings).

Evening Session on Community-Led Local Development

On 13 April, discussions were launched with the session “**Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) - (Financial) support for local development strategies, partnership and social innovation!**” which focused on a very specific instrument of EU cohesion policy allowing for the promotion of partnerships

between cities/regions, social economy and other actors.



1. Jan Olsson with Wolfgang Sobotka

After welcoming words by goodworks and a representative of the Working Group of the Danube Regions (ARGE), **Jan Olsson, REVES co-president**, gave participants a short overview on the history of EU cohesion policy reaching from a first integration of the concept “local development/use of endogenous resources” in EU policy in the end of the 70s over the Luxemburg strategy and instruments such as the Territorial Employment Pacts, LEADER, global grants or EQUAL until a period where the support of community-initiatives and related instruments rather disappeared. Olsson, who had been in charge of [a study and report by the European Economic and Social Committee on partnership in the framework of EU cohesion policy](#), highlighted the important work done in recent years by the EESC, the CoR, REVES and other European bodies/organizations to push for a re-introduction of such instruments and a stronger focus on partnership as basis for the implementation of EU cohesion policy. With the [regulations on the new programming period of European Structural and Investment](#)

[Funds \(2014-2020\)](#), instruments such as CLLD were reinforced and a [European Code of Conduct on the Partnership Principle](#) introduced.

Roman Haken, member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and EESC [rapporteur on Community-Led Local Development](#) outlined [main characteristics of CLLD](#): proposal of specific area-based local development strategies which have to be elaborated and implemented by multi-stakeholder groups in which public authorities should not have more than 50% of the votes; possibility to use different kind of ESI funds; coherence of the strategy with the specific ESI programmes through which it is financed; possibility to realize CLLD in the rural and urban area etc. Haken then outlined the challenges lying ahead: Even though the new regulations on ESIF funds had opened the door for support to community-led local development, Member States and managing authorities have so far been fairly reluctant on integrating the instrument in their operational programmes (a condition for its application). Reasons are partially fear of “losing control” over budget, partially ignorance. Haken encouraged local/regional authorities and civil society to push for a) an integration of CLLD in the operational programmes (OPs) in the framework of the upcoming revision of the OPs (the last calls for strategies and local action groups will be closed in the end of 2017) or b) the application of CLLD, where it had already been integrated in the operational programmes, but has not been used so far. Reacting to participants stating a clear need for capacity-building on CLLD in civil society and

public administration, Haken pointed to the possibility to finance capacity-building measures with budget allocated to technical assistance.

He also invited interested cities/regions to contact him should they need further information on CLLD and should they be interested in organizing national seminars on the topic.

The second part of the session was devoted to two practice examples.

Peter Rundkvist from the city of Göteborg (Business Region Göteborg) presented a peri-urban CLLD launched in 2015. The strategy for the initiative had been elaborated and is implemented by multi-stakeholder groups from three local districts in Göteborg in cooperation with neighbouring municipalities. It has a budget of 3 million EUR at disposal. A main objective of the strategy is to fight increasing segregation of the city which includes also a number of peri-urban zones facing numerous problems (highly industrialized agriculture with smaller enterprises being forced out of the market, land being sold to private owners for commercial purposes, lack of access to services etc...) Core of the strategy and its realization are so-called “creative hubs”, i.e. small local development groups including local administration, cooperatives, civil society and other players. The projects that will be developed and that should involve in total approximately 100 000 persons, are supposed to a) give visibility to the added value and potential of the area, b) deliver support to

SMEs and start-ups building their activities on existing local resources, c) promote education and awareness-raising not only at an academic level, d) promote sustainable production and consumption and e) fight segregation and social exclusion between and within rural and urban areas.

Approximately 8 years of rural experience of CLLD were presented **by Tomas Knuts, Concordia Jakobstad**. Knuts is board member of Aktion Österbotten rf - a union of civil society organisations, third sector structures, municipalities and private persons in the Swedish-speaking areas of Ostrobothnia (FI). The objective of the organisation is to stimulate local development and multi-stakeholder partnerships. This is done through a combination of instruments of EU cohesion policy (LEADER, instruments related to the European Maritime and Fishery Fund etc.) and national programmes (e.g. a specific programme focusing on the development of villages). The area in which Aktion Österbotten is active covers 14 municipalities and 107.000 inhabitants. In the programming period 2007-2013 Aktion Österbotten received 7,8 million EUR of financing. With this budget it was able to grant (financial) support to 209 local projects and 26 international and interregional projects. In the framework of LEADER, over 3,5 million EUR of private financing could be mobilized. The different meetings and activities organized by the initiative involved more than 2000 inhabitants. Under the new programming period 2014-2020, most activities will continue, complemented by a new CLLD initiative launched in the city of Kokkola based on ESF/ERDF finance.

Discussion showed once again the enthusiasm of a number of actors on the potential CLLD could have in their city/region, but also the low awareness on the existence of this instrument and hence the high demand for capacity-building measures. REVES president Jan Olsson confirmed the interest of REVES to further work on the topic, promote exchange between existing urban, peri-urban and rural CLLD initiatives in different REVES member territories (and elsewhere) and to push for a stronger uptake of CLLD by managing authorities in the review phase of Operational Programmes and the programming period post 2020.

“Regions&Alternative Markets for a Social, Sustainable and Citizen-driven Europe”

On 14 April discussions went on with a conference opened by representatives of goodworks, REVES and other Austrian social economy organizations as well as by local, national and European politicians. Several interventions followed to set the framework for the workshop and worldcafé sessions.



2. group photo with representatives of Lower Austria, Committee of the Regions, REVES and Goodworks

Wolfgang Sobotka, former vice-governor of Lower Austria and new Austrian Interior Minister, pointed to the challenges perceived in his regions where despite higher employment rates the old finance and social systems do not seem to be effective any longer. Referring to the Austrian economist, political scientist and philosopher Leopold Kohr he highlighted the importance specifically of local and regional initiatives and players such as the social economy. Taking ‘integration of refugees’ as an example, Sobotka stressed the capacity of social economy and local partnerships in general to create strong communities, to find innovative solutions to different type of challenges and to “fight irrationalism generated at national level”.



3. wolfgang Sobotka and Karl-Heinz Lambertz

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, first vice-president of the Committee of the Regions, also stated that a number of policies and initiatives aiming to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor all over Europe had failed. In his view, social economy – which should not be set equal with “non-profit making” - has the potential to act as an important driving engine for change. In this context, a main challenge and at the same time opportunity for the social economy is, according to Lambertz, the maintenance of its local roots, whilst developing, at the same time, stronger networks at European and international level. “We do not have an alternative to Europe! We need to get Europe back on the track!” Networks such as REVES should therefore further reinforce their actions. Here, Lambertz encouraged social economy to collaborate also with EU consultative bodies such as the Committee of the Regions or the European Economic and Social Committee – both European bodies for which social economy is not an abstract topic. He made reference to the recently adopted [opinion of the Committee of the Regions on social economy](#), in which many of the claims of social economy actors towards EU institutions and national governments have been backed (socially responsible public procurement, appropriate use of the instruments of EU cohesion policy, strengthening of partnerships, work on statistics etc.).



4. Jan Olsson, Wolfgang Sobotka and Franz Rybaczek

Bernard Kuderer and Szabolcs Hollósi presented the work of **goodworks**, a cross-border initiative which promotes products and services generated in a social and sustainable way. A multi-vendor online shop (where enterprises have the opportunity to directly sell their products), but also the organisation of parties following the Tupperware scheme figure among the tools developed by the organisation. According to Kuderer and Hollósi, possibilities to cooperate with social economy exist everywhere. The experience of goodworks in the field of partnership between the social economy, other type of private enterprises and public authorities confirms the positive outcome for all players involved. One of the challenges social economy organizations and their partnerships are faced with and have to work on, more in depth, however, is, in the view of the speakers, the need to further develop specific standards and quality control.



5. Bengt Storbacka

Referring to the Swedish history and situation, **Bengt Storbacka, Region Örebro County (SE)**, drew a slightly different picture and pointed to aspects that might jeopardize community initiatives and existing practices of partnership and dialogue. He mentioned three strong movements in Sweden – the workers movement, the reform movement in churches and the anti-alcohol movement – that had strongly contributed to the promotion of social economy, but also to the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships and places of dialogue. However, many of the organizations and initiatives that had emerged have disappeared due to the existence of a strong public sector and strong public welfare policies. A problem Swedish cities and regions are facing now, in a period of increasing segregation, unemployment and racism is the lack of civic engagement of many persons. New forms of cooperation have to be found – also, but not only due to shrinking public budgets. An example provided by Storbacka is that of a public library in a rural area which had to be closed, but was finally replaced by a library bus managed in cooperation with social economy and civil society.

Creating bridges to specifically one of the focus topics of the workshops – integration of refugees – Tanja Dedovic, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), reminded participants of the fact that migration is always generated and shows impact *at local level*. She informed participants of the growing interest of IOM in social economy and social enterprise and the need for support especially in South-Eastern European countries where the concept is so far not much known and where no legal frameworks for social economy exist. With regard to migration, Dedovic and her colleagues would like to see also a stronger change of perspective: Not only the challenges, but also and above all opportunities of migration should be analysed and social economy has a key role to play herein. Concluding, Dedovic expressed her hope to continue project work with goodworks and develop a closer partnership between the IOM and REVES.



Through video messages, **MEPs Heinz Becker (EPP, AT)** and **Jens Nilsson (S&D, SE)** confirmed the commitment of different political groups represented in the Social Economy Intergroup of the European Parliament to push for EU policies taking into account the needs and

potential of different types of social economy and local partnerships.

Marketplace

During the marketplace conference participants had the opportunity to get to know more in detail social economy enterprises and initiatives (e.g. the Italian cooperative Cadore or the Social Seducement project which is currently developing an online role play game on social economy entrepreneurship) and purchase products made by social economy enterprises such as *recikli*, *Verein Morgenstern* or *goodworks*.

Workshop sessions and worldcafé

(For more information on the speakers and presented initiatives please consult www.revesnetwork.eu)

Workshop 1: Visibility and marketing

Inputs and presentations by [goodworks](http://goodworks.at) (AT) and Project “[CULT](http://cult.ro)” (RO) on the topic of marketing and online-selling of products and services by social enterprises.

The workshop focused on the presentation of *goodworks* Innovation Agency that aims at building up European-wide marketing network of social enterprises and social initiatives. The [goodworks marketplace](http://goodworks.marketplace) is recently online, at the moment on a small scale but constantly growing. Second, the *goodworks* quality label – bound to social, ecological, regional, quality and innovative criteria – highlights the sustainability of the products and increases their market opportunities.

The project and label “CULT”, run by Romanian organization “AUR”, presented their way of marketing their clothes – created in a social responsible and eco-friendly way. AUR is also partner of goodworks and is working on building up national structure and doing preparation to join the international goodworks-marketplace.

goodworks is open for new partners in different European countries to foster the marketing initiative and to build up international marketplace for products and services made in social enterprises, by disadvantaged persons respectively. Some participants (from Croatia, Finland, Great Britain, Sweden, Spain) expressed their interest for further cooperation directly in the Workshop

If you are interested, please contact: service@goodworks.social

Workshop 2: Quality jobs and labour market integration

Discussions were fed by presentations of the initiative [“WELcommon” \(GR\)](#), [Okus Doma \(engl. Taste of Home, HR\)](#) and [Verein Morgenstern \(AT\)](#).

Participants agreed on the added value of social economy entrepreneurship and the advantages of a community when it comes to provide disadvantaged persons with training, orientation and access to the labour market. However, many work-integration initiatives are too much dependent on public financing – there is thus a need to develop a more diversified ‘business and finance model’, to

develop/link activities in various fields, to promote empowerment and up-scaling of successful models. Workshop participants also confirmed the need to involve, in various work-integration activities, not only the target groups (disadvantaged groups), but also other parts of the population, as persons also have to be integrated into a local community. Finally, the importance of making various organizations/enterprises and initiatives more visible and of explaining their added value to policy-makers and the population more in general was highlighted.

Workshop 3: Strengthening of solidarity-based communities

Input for this workshop was provided by the German internet platform [Fairmondo](#) (sharing economy working on the basis of social economy values), the association “Cité de l’Autre Economie” Dijon (engl. “City of alternative economy”, FR) and the European organization [“Eutropian” \(AT/IT\)](#).

The different contributions and discussions clearly showed existing links between social and solidarity economy, circular economy, sharing economy (those initiatives based on the values of social and solidarity economy) etc. – links that would need to be strengthened and more strongly exploited. A major question discussed with regard to financing: How to keep the balance between the potential impact of investors (and their possible expectations in terms of return on investment) and the interests of the community in which an initiative/enterprise is rooted and which it serves? Two speakers had underlined the

decision by their enterprises/organizations to avoid big investors.

Another topic coming up several times: Speakers and participants made reference to links (to be) made visible and promoted between rural and urban areas and to the danger (existing, for instance, also in EU cohesion policy) to ignore or lose sight of the interdependency of both. Too often, both areas are dealt with separately without taking into account the impact that specific initiatives focusing on one area (e.g. the rural one) might have on the other (e.g. the urban one).

Workshop 4: Social public procurement

The workshop on social public procurement drew on the presentation of the situation of Austrian social enterprises and of the case of the City of Brescia. A short overview by [Arbeit Plus](#) showed that - apart from some good practice examples - social considerations have hardly been used so far by contacting authorities in Austria. Arbeit Plus therefore contributed to the development of the Social Platform guide "[Public procurement for social progress](#)" (supported also by REVES) and which has been used also and above all to convince national governments to integrate, in their national legislation, opportunities provided by the new EU directive on public procurement.

The initiative presented by the city of Brescia started from the simple evidence that the provision of social services is not 100% paid from the public purse (public finance does not even represent a major part of it). Therefore,

the local government tried to elaborate a means through which the final user participates in the shaping of the service and in the choice of the provider. All this is done by promoting also cooperation between different service providers and without infringing the EU rules on procurement. The experience was compared mainly with a different situation in Sweden, where, according to participants, the way services are delivered is rather polarised: It is either totally public or totally private (according to a system of contracting out). The hybrid model would need to be better analysed to be applied.

Passing from social services to procurement in general (all kind of services and products purchased by a public authority), the workshop went through different experiences of social clauses, to check their effectiveness in terms of support to the development of social economy enterprises. Cases from Sweden and Italy, but also from Scotland, Portugal and Austria were reviewed and a certain degree of similarity was found. The participants concluded with the necessity to continue this joint work, also through the elaboration of a common project aimed at defining some kind of evolutionary standard for a proper use of the public procurement lever to support the development of social economy enterprises.

Workshop 5: Growing sector "health"

Three examples were presented and discussed: 1. "Luce e Libertà" (Light and Freedom) is a flagship initiative of the Community Foundation and a project of proofed local

experience in Health care / role model for other entities because of its affects on social impacts (Region of Messina, IT) 2. the approach of “Health in all policies – sustainability in health and welfare” from NÖGUS (Lower Austrian Health and Social Fund); and 3. the Social Franchise Concept of “Handicap Tailor’s” (goodworks AT-HU)

The Sicily experiences promotes economic aspects - empowering economic efficiency - welfare & health to liberate more than 60 people from psychiatric care and help to develop people and structures. A study of model „Welfare / Community-Health“ shows this way is much more efficient than „hosting“ people just in hospitals. The saving potential for Sicily: 300 Mio EUR within 5 years.

NÖGUS showed the results of investigations in active and future cooperation possibilities between hospitals / nursing homes and social enterprises. Several projects were implemented. One rather big opportunity will be worked out in an international project: In all EU countries (except DE) the re-processing of medical devices is not allowed. Just in AT this causes estimated costs of 730 Mio EUR each year. NÖGUS together with goodworks and international partners wants to show the potential of “2nd life medical devices” as a practical way to stop waste, save money and bring new jobs to social economy in national and transnational cooperation. Partners from other countries are welcome!

The “handicap tailor’s” was initiated in the framework of goodworks as cooperation between experts, beneficiaries (CLUB 81 – Club

for handicapped and non-handicapped persons in St. Poelten/AT) and producers (ESÈLY Kft. – social enterprise in Győr/HU) to produce true-to-size, custom-fit, timeless fashionable functional trousers and other clothes for persons with special needs. In a project together with NÖGUS, this model has also been implemented successfully in special-care homes. The next step in cooperation is on the one hand an expansion of the offer of outerwear and casual clothes, as well as an expansion to new regions by Social Franchising.

Workshop 6: Growing sector “Green jobs/energy”

Food for thought in this workshop was provided by [Repanet \(AT\)](#) and [Wind of Renewal \(GR\)](#).

Even though attention to environmental issues and energy-related topics seems to have increased, speakers and participants still perceive a great need to further create awareness, among both public authorities and citizens, on problems and possible solutions. A large potential and willingness to change existing ways of doing already exists in the population – however, appropriate empowerment methods as well as capacity-building actions (for public authorities and civil society) and appropriate partnerships between public and private actors (including citizens) are necessary to really exploit this. Participants also agreed on the fact that

pilot projects are important, but, once successful, need to be mainstreamed much more – here, social franchising might be a useful method amongst others. Speakers and participants also stated the variety of actors and networks that already work on the topic at local, regional, national and European level: They considered it necessary to improve networking between these actors and networks.

Workshop 7: Non- profit EEIG (European Economic Interest Grouping)

Mr. Hans-Jürgen Zahorka (Libertas, DE) is one of the most prominent experts in European EEIG and committed supporter of goodworks Innovation Agency in EEIG Affairs. He gave a concise overview of the subject and opens the space for questions on specific co-operation opportunities of participants. The EEIG is largely unknown, probably because it is anchored in EU law. However, the still fairly rare form provides excellent opportunities for tax EEIG members. The EEIG offers a lot of possibilities for different organizations to cooperate on economic base as well as in case of non-profit agendas. About 10 participants discussed different topics and case studies. Mr. Zahorka invited the audience also to a two-days-seminar about non-profit EEIG that will be hold in Germany this year.

Conclusions

A final plenary, animated by Margareta Wandel (Region Östergötland),



6. Margareta Wandel

gave the occasion to collect some feedback from the different workshops (see above) as well as proposals for future initiatives “at home” and at EU level.



7. Felice Scalvini

As **Felice Scalvini**, Co-President of REVES resumed, participants appreciated above all the possibility to increase their knowledge on existing practices and to find new partners to cooperate with. Many said to be motivated to more strongly use networks to discuss and share experience, build partnerships and form a real movement leading to change.

On public procurement the idea was launched to push, as a network, for a study by the European Parliament on the implementation of the new public procurement directive in the different Member States.

With regard to the activities of REVES and its members, participating members agreed that REVES should add to political activities and projects more opportunities to develop practical tools helping members to “grow together”. Moreover, the work on macro-regions was considered an aspect that should be considered worth to reflect on much more. Participants also proposed that REVES

members in one country/macro-region should follow the example of the Swedish members and gather from time to time to see what impact they could have together also at national level.

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8. Participants

On www.revesnetwork.eu: workshop descriptions, presentations and more pictures