

MESMER+

Mapping European Social Economy: Employment, Social Dialogue and the European Pillar of Social Rights

Project nr. 101052222

Policy lab – Poland

11th September 2023

From 10am to 2pm

Venue: Marzyciele i Rzemieślnicy, ul. Bracka 25, Warszawa

Event Summary

The policy lab was attended by 11 experts, representatives of:

- trade unions,
- employers' organisations,
- social economy centres,
- NGO umbrella organisations,
- associations of social cooperatives,
- social economy council.

The government side was not represented at the meeting. The invitation was addressed to representatives of the departments of social economy and social dialogue, but they did not participate due to their obligations related to the elections scheduled for 15th October in Poland.

In the first part of policy lab, the MESMER+ project was presented, and the results of the project's research were discussed, obstacles and leverages towards participation of SE in bipartite and tripartite dialogue, included in the table in the Annex.

Bilateral dialogue within the social economy

During the policy lab participants spent a lot of time discussing the reasons why bilateral dialogue is very rarely undertaken in SEEs. It was argued that NGO umbrella organisations are employers' organisations, where the interest of the employing, not the employed is represented. The voice of the SEEs employees is rarely considered in dialogue processes. An example was given of an umbrella organisation's demand for a liberalisation of the law towards allowing NGOs to terminate their employment contracts with pregnant women, which would increase NGOs financial liquidity, in complete disregard of the interests of women workers. It was also pointed out that in the sector surveys, the questionnaires are filled out by management representatives. Workers may have a different perspective, but their voice is not taken into account.

The trade union representative stressed that a conflict of interest between employers and employees should be recognised and both sides should not be expected to have the same goals. The group agreed to include the postulate to reclaim the concept of social dialogue in SE in the policy brief.

A detailed diagnosis of the reasons for the absence of bipartite dialogue in SE is also included in the document.

Social economy in tripartite dialogue

The group discussed the leverages for SE participation in social dialogue. Participants did not agree that ESG mentioned in interviews during the research could be a supporting factor. Rather, it was felt that the emergence of this reporting format is overestimated as companies focus on environmental rather than social aspects. This gives less opportunity for collaboration between business and the social economy.

Far more discussion was given to the factors undermining the presence of the social economy in the tripartite dialogue. There was much discussion of the thesis that SE represents a small percentage of GDP and is therefore rarely included in dialogue processes not directly relevant to the sector. The relevance of an indicator such as GDP was also questioned. Furthermore, one participant brought up the argument that the social economy is a larger part of the economy than, for example, the shipbuilding industry in Poland, which is very much present in the public debate. The reasons for the weakness of the SE sector in Poland, according to the participants, are related to the system of outsourcing public tasks and social services to social economy entities. These difficulties and demands for change are discussed in detail in the policy brief.

In the last part of the meeting, a separate perspective was presented by a trade union representative on the Social Dialogue Council, who emphasized that the SE could engage in social dialogue indirectly by influencing social partners. He also stressed that the Council is concerned with, for example, public procurement law, which is important for the social economy interests.

In the last part of the meeting, a separate perspective was presented by a trade union representative on the Social Dialogue Council, who highlighted the potential presence of SE in dialogue and pointed out ways in which the social economy could influence the social partners. He also stressed that the Council is concerned with, for example, public procurement law, important to the social economy, and SE could influence its work through cooperation with the representatives of the social partners on the Council.

Summary

At the end of policy lab, each participant formulated one most important postulate, in his/her opinion, which would influence the presence of dialogue in the social economy.

In the context of bipartite dialogue these postulates were:

- strengthening the role of the SEEs as democratic employers; emphasising that participatory management is the fundament of social economy;
- separation of interests in the SEEs into workers' and employers' interests;
- creation of dialogue structures that include workers' concerns; supporting the employee voice in the social economy;
- building bridges between the social economy and trade unions, inviting to seminars, joint lobbying, joint voice.

In the context of tripartite dialogue:

- establishing a body to represent the social economy interests and to educate and lobby on the social economy - to make the social partners aware of the subject;
- cooperation between SE and social partners in the Social Dialogue Council;
- delegation of ES in trade unions and employers' organisations, formulation of common interests and joint pressure on the government;
- educating SEEs on the benefits of participating in social dialogue, selecting key topics that carry these benefits and communicating them (due to very limited SEEs resources that SEEs can allocate to participate in social dialogue processes).

ANNEX

	Leverages	Obstacles
Bipartite dialogue	<p>Electability and terms of office of members of boards in SEEs.</p> <p>Debate about the quality of employment in NGOs.</p> <p>The integrative dimension of employment that empowers people working in social cooperatives.</p>	<p>Temporary contracts, low wages, due to which workers are in a weak bargaining position and are afraid to raise the issue of quality of work.</p> <p>Considering work in SE as a mission – SEEs are not perceived as workplaces both by employers and employees.</p> <p>Vulnerability of people working in social cooperatives, deepening inequalities between employers and employees.</p>
Tripartite dialogue	<p>Permanent representation of SE in sectoral dialogue bodies.</p> <p>ESG as an opportunity for the social economy in establishing cooperation between SE and business.</p>	<p>Limited financial and human resources in SE sector.</p> <p>Low recognition of social economy by social partners.</p>