

**Call for an expression of interest
in the creation of a Working Group on the exchange of good practices
amongst "enterprises in the solidarity-based economy"**

The background

The Objectif Plein Emploi network (cf. www.ope.lu), which is based in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, has been active for more than 20 years and now has more than 650 employees who provide community services and a wide range of creative and local development activities (particularly the provision and maintenance of outdoor facilities and furniture). In terms of its organisation, the OPE has a Resource Centre and a series of local or sectoral groups (the Initiative and Management Centres) that have their own Board of Directors (on which local, elected councillors are well represented). The network benefits from a financing system that is dependent upon the commitment of the local municipal councils, supplemented by State funding for projects that employ job seekers.

The OPE therefore defines itself as a solidarity-based enterprise in the sense that it:

- Responds to needs that have not been satisfied by the conventional private sector or by the public sector
- Combines private resources (since it charges for the provision of products and services), public resources (grants) and voluntary resources (contributions in kind of working time or other types of contribution)
- Develops projects that have their origins in citizens' initiatives
- Organises public private partnerships.

On the basis of its own activities, the OPE would now like to share its experiences with a view to improving its definition from a conceptual point of view. It is for this very reason that it has decided to invest in, and join forces with, the INEES (Institut Européen d'Economie Solidaire – cf. www.inees.org) in order to examine its own practices more closely and to provide tools and more accurate lines of argument concerning the solidarity-based economy. The public authorities are extremely interested in these reflections and the actors themselves would very much like to see the creation of a network so that they can exchange their practices and thoughts in this area.

Continues overleaf

Please return this form before 15 April 2006

By e-mail to: lavilluniere@inees.org

By fax to: (+352) 53 04 45 510

By post to: INEES - 1,rue du Moulin, L-3857 Schiffflange - Luxembourg

Organisation:

Adress:

Phone:

E-mail:

Is interested in INEES' call for the expression of interest on the exchange of good practices in the field of the solidarity-based economy and is prepared to take part in this initiative.

Areas of interest:

Is able to collaborate in the following way:

Call for an expression of interest

The aim of this call for an expression of interest is to seek out managers of solidarity-based enterprises, researchers and universities and any other interested parties, with a view to creating a platform for the exchange of good practices and to provide a better definition of the conceptual field of the solidarity-based economy and the way in which this is translated in to managerial practices.

The remit

Our theoretical approach leads us to limit the scope of this research to the solidarity-based economy, as defined above. Indeed, we are very much in favour of the extended networking of organisations that work in the field of the social and solidarity-based economy so that they are able to develop a common political voice, although our intention is to contribute our reflections as a component part of this social and solidarity-based economy.

The first challenge is to establish common recognition at a European level and from this point of view there is a pressing need to develop a glossary and bibliographical references so as to establish exactly what we wish to achieve together.

We feel that there are two pitfalls to be avoided in terms of what we are not and what we do not want:

- The solidarity-based economy must not be restricted to social inclusion and/or insertion through economic activity. This may be a significant component of our activities and may even be an important aspect from the point of view of the funding authorities, however our aim is not merely to help individuals (in some cases not for the first time) to become employable (almost as if we are called upon to act as a safety net), but rather it is to promote the creation of long-term jobs in areas in which the focus is upon dignity and the complete expression of citizenship (without making any distinction between the main and a so-called second employment market).
- The performance of our enterprises cannot be measured in terms of economic and financial profitability and the ability to compete on the market. However, it should be pointed out that the majority of social enterprises assume their position as economic entities that have to prove themselves on the market (and therefore implement the corresponding managerial strategies), whilst on the other hand there are also those social enterprises that define themselves as social entities that work on the second labour market, free from the impact of any economic eventualities (indeed, for the most part, they seek out grants to finance their social work).

We feel that our theoretical approach places us between the two: what is at stake here is the establishment of initiatives based on an alternative vision of the way in which society should function, rather than accepting to play the role of a repair system for the dominant (liberal) system. Indeed, we are striving to achieve the recognition of a third pillar between the public and private economy, based on sustainable local development that combines public, private and voluntary resources. That is what we call the solidarity-based economy and it is around this concept that we must build a more substantial body of theoretical work (with the help of economists, sociologists, philosophers and all the areas of research concerned), focussing on governance (both internal and external) and reporting systems, preparing tools and instruments that may help in the decision-making process, etc.

The expected means and output

The participants will provide the means. There is no money to be earned (nor time to waste). The INEES will assume responsibility for the coordination and facilitation of this dynamic process. Following this call for the expression of interest, we will put forward proposals regarding the way in which we may organise this work and will also provide a more accurate definition of the topics to be addressed. We intend to focus on the specific nature of the solidarity-based economy, since there already exist many opportunities to participate in European projects on social inclusion, social responsibility, communication, local development, training... One more project in this area would therefore not necessarily provide any significant degree of added value.

It may well be possible to put together a project for which we can seek European funding, as long as this responds to the aims that we intend to define jointly.

The working languages will be English and French, although it will be possible to add other languages, as long as the organisations concerned agree to fund translation and interpretation services in these languages.

We may well associate our work with other, more global dynamic processes, according to the possibilities and opportunities that are available to us (such as the "Globalisation of Solidarity Forum" due to be held in Brussels in 2007, for example).

Participants from outside Europe are also most welcome.

Yours, in solidarity,

Please fill in and return the attached form.