



Strategic Orientations

2021 – 2023

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The RIPESS Europe strategic plan is based on the collective work of the Coordinating Committee held in Elne, France, from 16th to 18th January 2020. It was presented during a special online members' meeting on 23rd April that focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and crises. It will be validated in the upcoming online General Assembly meeting, on September 18th, 2020.

The current Covid-19 pandemic and resulting crises and the future of SSE

The impact and consequences of the global COVID-19 are significantly impacting many already existing systemic crises such as climate change, lack of participatory democracy, loss of social references, financial and economic insecurities. It is also leading to a major loss of human rights for many through a cascade of interlinked consequences: people who have lost their jobs are losing their homes and their right to food. Many cannot afford access to healthcare. We are thus more than ever convinced that going back to the “old normal” is not the answer. We have a unique opportunity to 'build back better' with a recovery grounded in public policies that are anchored in Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) values and principles that care for people and the environment, producers and users, workers and local communities, from small-scale everyday practices to global networked solutions built around our shared goals. As an SSE network, RIPESS Europe is working to achieve this with a constantly increasing number of members and partners. Solidarity economy is increasingly seen as a credible alternative to the financialised economy that generates environmental damage and considers Nature as an endless shopping mall. This lack of respect for natural boundaries and increased intensive industrial animal agriculture have contributed to spreading the SARS-Cov2 virus on such a vast scale to different populations, according to many

scientists. Recovery plans should not continue to support the neoliberal system of providing more stimulation to excessive consumption or "green and social washing" and other fake solutions that will divert funding towards initiatives that are far removed from the foundations of the SSE. Instead they should channel funding towards those that genuinely serve territories, economic democracy, and citizens, and build environmental, social and economic justice through SSE.

RIPESS Europe has embarked on a vast programme to implement convergences between social and ecological transition actors. However, this is a long-term process that requires considerable energy and finance. It is a promising challenge, but one that requires deep discussion within the movement itself on various issues such as the Universal Basic Income. (UBI). It is important to uphold human rights and decent living conditions for all.

It is encouraging to see the increasing number of countries in Europe that are moving towards SSE and participating in the network, and the quality of the innovative practices resulting from the members' initiatives. The role of SSE as an important part of the solution is obvious and must be strongly promoted through collective advocacy. Specifically, we hope to continue the development of regional networks in Northern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, the Balkan region and in the longer term, with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions in co-operation with RAESS, the African network of RIPESS Intercontinental.

Nine years after its official creation (RIPESS EU was officially founded on 6th September 2011), RIPESS Europe is a network that is present in most European countries.

In this context RIPESS Europe has defined its strategy for the next 3 years.

A three-dimensional strategy:

1) Promote territorial ecosystems and support the emergence of new networks

This first strategic orientation regards the promotion of territorial ecosystems and of emerging new networks by fostering the valorisation of local SSE practices, their networking at the European level, and their economic inter-cooperation.

1.1. RIPESS Europe has agreed to **relaunch the mapping of initiatives by drafting a new questionnaire, interviews and experience sharing, to better understand the activities of its members.** This has three complementary objectives:

- **Enable member networks to get to know each other better and to envisage potential concrete projects and co-operation at trans-local levels. This helps foster on-going knowledge-sharing and exchange, peer-to-peer life-long learning and exchange at all levels.**

- Map SSE responses to Covid-19 and integrate best practice into a collective advocacy strategy based on the Scientific Committee's analyses. This would then provide a European perspective.

- **Enhance the value of the activities carried out by the members** to raise public awareness of the panoply of initiatives of SSE with special focus on particular to youth, students, trainees, Local Authority staff, media. This should include peer-to-peer training, mutual support and exchange between members.

- Build strong intersectional alliances with other social movements to enhance collective advocacy and actions on such subjects as the environment and climate crisis, ecofeminism, social habitat and food sovereignty.
- **Advocate strongly for SSE to be included in EU policy** in the Green Deal and Farm-to-Fork policy under consideration.

1.2. A position of **communication officer** has been created. This allows better communication within the network, thanks to the time dedicated to close contact with members. Redesign of all the online tools intricately linked to RIPESS Intercontinental for meaningful sharing of communication materials and joint **activities on media, social networks, and online campaigns**.

1.3. Special attention will be devoted to the **use, promotion, and development of collaborative digital tools for SSE** in cooperation with organizations and communities of free software development (**real/virtual SSE Market Places, promoting local currencies**). The mapping will provide support for promoting new currencies and marketplaces. Some of these tools will be made available and shared with all network members and will help with economic inter-co-operation (including digital social currencies). This approach needs to be sensitive to social inclusiveness and language.

1.4. More **emphasis will be placed on participatory activist community research, with the strengthening of the Scientific Committee as a research community** for SSE and intensified work with universities, research centres and networks (EMES, CIRIEC, EURICSE, ILO Academy, EPOG+...), participation/co-organisation of summer schools, thematic conferences/projects and e-learning activities.

1.5 Collectively develop our vision our co-operation and realisations for the future of SSE and between all SSE actors.

2) The development and recognition of solidarity economy

The main objective here is to strengthen the efforts on developing and recognising the solidarity economy as an alternative economic paradigm, the co-construction of public policies, advocacy with an increased effort on communication and media.

2.1. **Advocacy is one of the main axes of RIPESS Europe's activity.** It is carried out through the involvement of members in their contexts to **co-construct public policies and produce relevant evaluation tools based on collective development** and actor participation. These approaches are even more important as the tendency of policy makers is to apply existing measurement tools that are designed for realities that are totally foreign to SSE contexts. This is particularly important in the context of the proposed European Green Deal. RIPESS Europe also needs to feed into the existing RIPESS Intercontinental advocacy processes at institutional and intercontinental levels.

There will be an on-going emphasis on supporting the interconnections between food sovereignty, agroecology, and SSE in advocacy for public policies at all levels.

2.2 The systematic collection of what each country is putting in place in conjunction with their members and allies to foster the development of SSE will be the subject of specific work by RIPESS Europe to **enable useful comparisons for members to advance their own contexts**. Such exchanges currently exist and should be multiplied (for ex. Through existing and new European projects such as Erasmus+).

2.3. **At European level**, we are involved in high-level meetings where the long-term trends of economic and social policies are negotiated and where we intervene whenever necessary to defend the interests of SSE values and actors, notably in the European Parliament (Social Economy Intergroup) and with the new European Commission - on the Action Plan for SSE and on the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork and our members' many European projects.

2.4. **At trans-national level**, the network can become a reference and an observatory for policies and regulations at the national level that promote or hinder the development of SSE. Working with European networks of public bodies such as REVES and ICLEI and with research centres / think tanks such as Euricse can support the advocacy of national networks.

2.5. **At trans-local level**, RIPESS Europe will continue to work with networks of Local Authorities and members such as RTES on territorial development initiatives and local policies for SSE, mapping and promoting active exchange with SSE actors.

2.6. In addition, more work will be carried out on the **development of territorial cooperation**, networking of training projects on networking, peer-to-peer exchange, and community building **from the perspective of SSE ecosystems**. Specifically, we will work to build a coherent vision from local to European levels. Inter-territorial and feminist economy could be targets for future project submissions.

2.7. **The existing link with the alternative media will be strengthened**. We will continue to approach partner media with the objective of significantly increasing the level of information dedicated to SSE in the press.

2.8 The Scientific Committee will develop a bottom-up researcher-activist approach to support the overall work of RIPESS EU.

2.9 Special attention will be paid to building intersectional alliances with other social movements for advocacy and joint actions.

3) Creating and strengthening our alliances

This last strategic dimension will be done particularly in the field of advocacy and campaigning, both at the institutional level and with other transformative economy movements. We will continue to place a strategic focus on these aspects and pay particular attention to the participation of youth and women and their forms of organisation.

Given that our work is also part of RIPESS Intercontinental, we need to pay specific attention to feeding into RIPESS Intercontinental dynamics, with special focus on the Mediterranean Basin, which is a territory shared between Europe, North Africa (together with RAESS) and the Near East. Our work also feeds into specific advocacy with various UN Institutions (UN Task Force on Social Solidarity Economy, UNGA, FAO...) carried out through RIPESS Intercontinental.

3.1. RIPESS Europe will continue to associate the holding of its General Assembly with a national event hosted by one of its members. In 2020, it will take place online (due to the Covid-19 conditions), hopefully in 2021 it will be held in Romania and in 2022 in Luxembourg.

3.2. It is fundamentally important to strengthen our alliances. The ambition is to build a collective agenda bringing together the events carried by the various organisations involved in transforming the economy to strengthen individual and collective strategies and demonstrate the genuine potential of the movement for transforming economies. This is why RIPESS Europe is one of the main organisers of the World Social Forum on Transformative Economies (forum.transformadora.org) that held a week-long online Forum (with around 2000 registered participants). A second online event will be held in October in link with the FESC 2020 (*Fira d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya*). We will continue to approach and work with networks and movements on ecological transition, climate justice, degrowth, feminist economy, solidarity finance, food sovereignty and agroecology and promotion of the Commons.

3.3. We will continue to promote democratic citizen's participation and self-organisation as key drivers of systemic change, through campaigns such as "Transformative Cities" (with TNI, HIC, Friends of the Earth and others...), research-action as Urban Arena (with ICLAI, Ecolise and others) and the dissemination of campaigns during local elections such as "Pacte pour la Transition" (in France) as an example for other countries.

3.4. Several collaborative projects are currently focused on the construction of training modules for different types of public. Socioeco.org, plays its full role as a resource centre, and RIPESS will continue use this tool to better disseminate the knowledge accumulated through the co-operation of its members. These projects include many RIPESS members.

3.5. Multiplying the opportunities for experiences, co-operation and active participation of young people is the basis of a network commitment to encourage the individual and collective growth of the new generations, the creation of a network or a **YouthSSE platform**, addressing the issue of the future of work and generational change.

3.6. Finally, RIPESS is working on a project to develop webinars to support all these strategies in collaboration with its members (according to their specific skills), with RIPESS Intercontinental and other networks such as GSEF (Global Social Economy Forum).

Given the uncertain times and context, it is difficult to plan beyond the next 3-year period, especially since many of the SSE enterprises and initiatives will be concentrating on recovering and surviving the Covid-19 and post-Covid economic crises. Nevertheless the prospects

opened by the global crisis itself could also lead to a more rapid expansion of SSE in many territories where citizens have become more aware of the challenges of our times, and the necessity and urgency of concrete, truly democratic, resilient, mutualistic, co-operative and solidarity-based policies and communities. This also implies upholding human rights and living conditions for all. This work includes collective work with social movements, alliance- and network-building to engage a critical mass to promote the systemic changes we need, and advocacy work with the more influential and policy-building institutions (in our case, mainly the European Union, but also inputting into RIPPSS Intercontinental work at UN level) that can enable and support the emergence of SSE and other transformative economies.