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**Olivia GREGOIRE welcomes the European Commission's communication on
the Action Plan for the Social Economy**

Olivia GREGOIRE, Secretary of State for the Social and Responsible Economy, reporting to Bruno LE MAIRE, Minister for the Economy, Finance and Recovery, welcomes the European Commission's presentation of the Action Plan for the Social Economy, which gives a strong impetus to the development of this sector in the European Union.

The social economy employs more than 13 million people across Europe, in nearly 3 million organisations. With very different legal forms, in our country (associations, foundations, mutual societies, cooperatives, social enterprises) as in our neighbours, this sector is characterised by the search for a social impact before financial profit. Representing up to 10% of GDP in certain EU countries such as France, Spain and Italy, it represents a future response to today's climatic and social challenges and has been identified by the European Commission as one of the 14 industrial ecosystems that can strengthen Europe's resilience.

However, the potential of the social economy in terms of job creation and social added value is not fully exploited, and there are many disparities between European countries.

This is why, ten years after the Social Business Initiative, which was the first Action Plan to develop social enterprises in Europe and which allowed to strongly increase their visibility, this new Action Plan takes note of the remaining obstacles to develop this sector, in particular the lack of clarity on the definition of the structures concerned. It proposes operational means to make the social economy better known to citizens and

Member States, and to better finance and support it through a general framework favourable to the development of these structures.

Olivia GREGOIRE particularly welcomes the European Commission's willingness to promote to public authorities, both national and local, the tool of public procurement to develop social projects via social economy structures, an objective for which France has already been strongly mobilised since the publication of the "Climate and Resilience" law of 22 August 2021 and the presentation of its new National Plan for Sustainable Procurement 2021-2025.

The Secretary of State also notes the establishment of innovative public-private partnerships to both build together and finance social projects via new specific programmes. These partnerships will be valuable for the development of social enterprises, which the Government itself has encouraged by renewing the framework and ambition of impact contracts since last year.

According to Olivia GREGOIRE, « *the Commission's Action Plan is in line with France's long-standing priorities. Our country intends to do its best to support the Commission in order to create a dynamic around the social economy in all the other Member States, especially during the next French presidency of the Council of European Union starting on 1 January 2022* ».

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