

More than work integration

Strategy for the delimitation of a population of social economy actors for a monitor of the social economy in Flanders

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1. Introduction

What are social enterprises and where can they be found? What is their social impact? These questions are tackling scientists and policy makers alike. Especially in Flanders,¹ where despite all efforts different conceptualizations by scientists, policy makers and practitioners still co-exist. And certainly in these times when societies and governments at all levels are increasingly confronted with limited government budgets on the one hand and high social needs on the other hand, and are trying to stimulate the development of innovative answers. New legal frameworks for social enterprises have been developed in Flanders and elsewhere in order to provide a legal infrastructure for innovative responses to social needs, searching for more efficient but also more participatory models of service provision, enhancing social cohesion and solidarity. However, those legal frameworks are known and used with various degrees of success. Moreover, not all enterprises that have a legal status that is 'fit' for social entrepreneurship view themselves as social enterprises or as part of the social economy. Most importantly, there is a lack of a clear and broadly shared definition of social enterprises and social economy.

¹ Flanders is a region in Belgium. Belgium has been a fully-fledged federal country since the reforms of 1993. Belgium has constitutional regions, called Regions and Communities, and which have their own competences and resources. There are three territorial regions and three communities on the basis of language. The regions are Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital Region. The communities are the Flemish, French and German speaking Communities. The Flemish Region and the Flemish Community have a Flemish Parliament and a Government of Flanders. This Flemish federated entity, with Brussels as its capital, has its own legislative and executive power. Flanders is responsible for, inter alia: the economy, foreign trade, health care, energy distribution, housing, agriculture and horticulture, environment, public works and traffic, employment, culture, and education, science and innovation (www.flanders.be).

Scholars highlight the importance of entrepreneurship with social aims and the economic democracy that is realized via social enterprises (see for example Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Defourny, Develtere, Fontenau & Nyssens, 2009; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010, 2012; Kerlin, 2006; Monzon & Chaves, 2012). They develop a broad view on the social economy and social enterprises. Policy makers have come to see them as effective tools to fight poverty, to create employment and to foster social cohesion. Over the last quarter of a century, the Flemish government has been slightly evolving from a restricted view, mainly focusing her policy measures on work integration social enterprises (WISE's), to a broader view. Local governments in Flanders however still tend to stick very much to the restricted view. And the field itself is still divided between WISE's on the one hand and other social enterprises and initiatives among which there is no shared self-consciousness and concept of the social economy. Both for the Flemish government, the local governments and the field it is still unclear what other types of social enterprises (other than WISE's) exist and where they can be found. Despite changes in policies with respect to social enterprises, both at the regional and European level, a restricted view on the social economy coupled with a silo-approach in the development of supportive policy measures is still hindering the development of the field, as well as its measurement, assessment and recognition.

We aim to develop a conceptualization and delimitation of social enterprises that can underpin our endeavor to elaborate a monitor of the social economy in Flanders. We aim this monitor to represent reality, that is to be in line with the international academic research while also being informed by policy visions and validated by representatives in the field. Therefore, we start from existing academic conceptualizations of social economy and social enterprises and confront them with (a) one another, as well as with (b) definitions we find in policy documents (at European and Flemish level), and with (c) perceptions of representative organizations of those enterprises and initiatives that adopt a form and praxis that, according to the academic literature, is prototypical for the social economy. We aim to contribute to a clear understanding of the social economy, to the development of more social enterprises and of a self-conscious field. Thus, we are co-producing this reality, along with policy makers and practitioners, while also monitoring it.

In this paper, we first present the starting point of our research as well as its design and methodology. Then, we develop a 'realistic' delimitation of the social economy, one that is:

- 1) *Theoretically grounded*, in line with the definitions in the academic literature and research concerning the social economy, describing essential properties of social enterprises,
- 2) *Grounded in a lived and understood reality*:
 - a) Referring to conceptualizations in recent *policy* documents in Flanders and Europe,
 - b) Recognized by the *representatives of associations of enterprises* who, in academic literature and policy documents are generally understood as pre-eminent forms of 'social enterprises'.
- 3) *Practical*, that is leading to a delimitation of a population of social enterprises about which data can be collected in national administrative databases and via surveys and case studies.

By way of conclusion we describe the limitations and strengths of our approach, as well as further research steps to be taken within the framework of the development of a broad monitor of the social economy in Flanders.

2. Research design and methodology

2.1 Conceptualizing the social economy in Flanders: current situation

There is no universally accepted definition of the social economy and of social enterprises in Flanders, with definitions developed by, amongst others, government, and industry bodies representing the social economy in general, or types or branches of social enterprises.² This is not a unique Flemish or Belgian reality. In the academic literature, as well as policy documents at the European level and in different European countries, different definitions about social entrepreneurship, social economy and social enterprise exist, and different attempts are undertaken to provide a general definition, criteria or typology (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008; CIRIEC 2005; Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; OECD, 2006; European Commission, 2011; European Commission, 2013; Monzón & Chaves, 2008, 2012). The ICSEM project of the EMES-network for example is aiming at mapping the field of social enterprises in

² <http://users.telenet.be/cr33442/ecosocB.pdf>

Europe, thus providing a framework that can be used to compare social enterprise models and their respective institutionalization processes across the world (ICSEM, 2013). Likewise, for some years already, CIRIEC is trying to develop a mapping of the social economy in Europe (Monzon & Chaves, 2008, 2012).

In Flanders, work integration has been one of the key objectives of social economy policies and social enterprises are generally put on a par with work integration social enterprises (WISE's) (Gijssels & Van den Broeck, 2008; Jacobs, Gijssels & Heylen, 2012; Jacobs & Gijssels, 2013; Van Opstal, Deraedt & Gijssels, 2009a en b; Spear, 2012). On an aggregated level, these social enterprises form the Social Insertion Economy (SIE), which has the inclusion of people with a large distance to the labor market as their main goal. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Flemish government has recognized and supported different types of work integration enterprises (WISE's) as important tools for social integration through employment. WISE's are important employers generating employment for those people who experience severe difficulties to get and hold a job in the 'regular' labor market. WISE's actively invest in coaching and training for those target workers. They operate within the market, are risk taking and innovative in the way they work with target groups and in the services and products they develop. It is a heterogeneous family of initiatives, encompassed by a variety of coexisting legal frameworks. They differ largely in the way they realize work integration, in resources used and in target groups served (Deraedt, Van Opstal & Gijssels, 2009a; Van Opstal, Deraedt & Gijssels, 2009; Jacobs, Gijssels & Heylen, 2012).

WISE's were originally established as private initiatives offering work integration to disadvantaged persons, but along the way more and more focus was laid on integration of target group workers into the regular labor market. Most of the schemes established from the 1990s onwards offer temporary compensations for 'temporary unemployability' of the employees and intend to support the transition from unemployment to employment in the 'regular labor market' (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008; Van Opstal, Deraedt & Gijssels, 2009; Deraedt, Van Opstal & Gijssels, 2009a; Jacobs, Gijssels & Heylen, 2012; Jacobs & Gijssels, 2013).

In practice, although a wide definition has been formulated, both by the government and the platform of social enterprises, in Flanders the term 'social economy' is mainly used to refer to the social insertion economy. Up till now, there is no consensus over what other enterprises can be defined as 'social enterprises'.

2.2 Broader research aim: developing a broad monitor of the social economy in Flanders

Because there is no universally accepted broad definition of social enterprises and social economy in Flanders and Belgium, and narrow visions predominate, attempts to monitor the social economy in Flanders have been inherently limited, covering only a part of the reality that in the international literature is defined as the social economy.

In line with the international academic literature, we aim to develop a monitor of the social economy in the broad sense, not restricting social economy to work integration. We want this monitor to reflect a lived and recognized reality. In order to do this, we develop a theoretically informed delimitation, underpinned by the academic literature in this field, which we present to policy makers and representative associations of those organizations that are theoretically perceived as operators in the social economy. After all, in order to establish a population of organizations that will be encompassed by our monitor, our strategy is to demand policy makers and representative associations of those organizations that are theoretically perceived as operators in the social economy to provide us with lists of names and identifications of those organizations they see as part of the social economy. In order for them to be able to help us with this, they need to get a clear view on the essential properties of operators in the social economy and on clear criteria that distinguish them from other types of (economic) organizations. They then can provide us with a list of organizations that, according to them and after consultation of their member organizations, can be defined as social economy organizations. This list will be an empirical translation of the theoretical population. It is not meant as definitive and fixed, but rather as a dynamic representation of an evolving reality. After all, during the exercise, consciousness about what social economy is and what the features are of operators in that field will grow, with more and more organizations self-consciously developing (into) social enterprises, with policy makers recognizing them as such and developing policy measures to support them as such. And we will always know what population will be observed at a certain point in time and be able to collect and analyze data about the organizations implied, showing their character and impact.

In a first attempt to develop a social economy monitor the population to monitor was limited to work integration enterprises (WISE's). Therefore, we called it a monitor of the social insertion economy. This was in line with the aim of the Flemish government to monitor the results of its social economy policy measures which were mainly situated in the restricted field of the social insertion economy. After the development of a methodology for this monitor and a first roll out of results by HIVA (Deraedt & Van Opstal, 2009ab; Van Opstal, Deraedt & Gijssels, 2010) this monitor was taken over by the Flemish Subsidy Agency for Work and Social Economy (FSAWSE) and the Flemish Department for Work and Social Economy, monitoring the social insertion economy in Flanders in a dynamic way. In line with the international academic literature in which a broader conceptualization is advocated and the evolution toward a broader conceptualization of the social economy by the Flemish as well as European government, we now aim to develop a broader monitor of the social economy providing that reflects a lived reality in Flanders. In close collaboration with colleagues at Ghent University College with whom we cooperate within the framework of the Policy Research Centre Work and Social Economy we will also elaborate the indicators that are collected for these enterprises, trying to measure the multiple social impacts realized by those social enterprises.

We take the monitor of the social insertion economy, and the preparatory feasibility study that was made (Gijssels & Van den Broeck, 2008), as a starting point for our elaboration. The aim of our current research is to elaborate the monitor with respect to:

1. The population of social enterprises covered by the monitor, trying to encompass a broader reality than that of the social insertion economy.
2. The indicators collected, trying to measure the multiple social impacts realized by those social enterprises.

This paper focuses on the first aim. In what comes next, we will discuss the used methodology and different research steps.

2.3 Methodology and research steps

In a first phase we conducted desk research, during which a literature review was made and academic definitions and conceptualizations of social enterprises were investigated. This desk research resulted in a working document in which a broad definition and delimitation of the social economy was presented. In a next step, we confronted these academic definitions and criteria with definitions of social enterprises developed in recent policy documents, on the level of Flanders as well as Europe. In a last step, we confronted industry bodies representing organizations that in the literature are generally described as pre-eminent operators in the social economy with these academic and policy definitions. To this aim, two focusgroups were organized.³ In the first focusgroup we presented a working paper describing the aim of the research, the research strategy and the definitions of social economy and social enterprises that we encountered in scientific and policy literature. We asked for feedback on the definitions and criteria and the feasibility of our research strategy. We asked which of their member organizations could be defined as 'social enterprises'. Their feedback basically pinpointed to the fact that not all of their member organizations could be perceived a priori as 'social enterprises' and that we lacked criteria of their entrepreneurial and social features that are concrete enough to establish a list of 'social enterprises' among their membership. Thus, we developed a set of empirical criteria – again grounded in the academic literature – and asked for their feedback again.

We thus started from a 'sensitizing concept' of social economy and social enterprises, informed by theory in academic and policy texts. 'Sensitizing concepts' suggest "what to look for and where to look" (Ritzer, 1992). Blumer (1969) argued that "[A sensitizing concept] gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. (In contrast to) definitive concepts (that) provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. The hundreds of our concepts - like culture, institutions, social structure, mores, and personality – are not definitive concepts but are sensitizing in nature."

³ The second focus group is planned on October 8, 2013. At the time this paper had to be handed in (August 31, 2012), we did not yet receive the results of this second consultation. The preparatory working document for this focus group was ready and had been sent to the participants. Their feedback will be incorporated in the final version of this paper to be presented at the CIRIEC Conference in October 2013.

We confronted stakeholders with these theory-driven sensitizing concepts and refined them on the basis of their feedback. Thus, we were able to take into account different perspectives by key figures representing the field. Driven by a phenomenological dialectic approach (Verhoeven, 1969) we distilled the interpretation of these representatives of the reality of their member organizations and the extent to which this fitted with the definitions put forward in the academic and policy literature. Their views resulted in a refined set of criteria. Clear criteria regarding social enterprises were developed and discussed with the stakeholders. These criteria can be divided into criteria concerning the economic (or entrepreneurial) character of these enterprises, as well as their social character. With the help of these criteria a stratified delimitation of the social economy will be developed which will result in a practical repertory of social enterprises in Flanders. This repertory makes the collection and analysis of data upon them in existing administrative databases and via survey and case studies possible. Since social reality is dynamic, and concept and activity dependent (Gijssels, 2006; Archer, 1995, 2000, 2003; Bhaskar, 1979), this repertory is perceived as adjustable in a dynamic way, taking into account evolving definitions of the situation and organizational developments among the stakeholders. This way, as researchers we are implied in a true 'double hermeneutic' (Giddens, 1984), meaning that we are conceptualizing phenomena that are meaningful, while also contributing to a further sense making and conceptualization of these phenomena.

3. Towards a realistic conceptualization of social enterprises in Flanders

3.1 Academic theory

In the academic literature, the term 'social economy' is traditionally linked to heterodox organizations such as popular associations, mutual societies and co-operatives, said to make up its backbone, with their system of values and principles of conduct and their self-help collective action in response to societal challenges, originally – in the 18th and 19th centuries – the aberrations of industrial capitalism leading to severe living conditions of large parts of the population. Today, the term 'third sector' is often used to refer to the meeting point of the non-profit sector and the social economy, that are largely overlap but are also distinct in some important respects (Defourny, Develtere, Fonteneau & Nyssens, 2009; Evers & Laville, 2004; Gijssels & Van den Broeck, 2008; Gijssels, 2010) with organizations "at the cross-roads of market, public policy and civil society" (Nyssens, 2006).

CIRIEC (2005) defines social economy as *"the whole of private, formally organized enterprises, with decision autonomy and freedom of membership, who were put up to meet the needs of the members by producing goods and providing services, insurance and finance, by which decision-taking and any distribution of profits or surpluses between members aren't directly linked to capital ownership or membership-contributions. Each member has one vote. The social economy also exists out or private, formally organized enterprises with decision autonomy and freedom of membership who provide non-market services for households and whose added values or surpluses can't be contributed to economic agents who create, control or finance them."*

In CIRIEC's overviews of the ways the social economy is defined in the EU-member states (Monzón & Chaves, 2008, 2012) it is made clear that cooperatives and mutual societies are in general known as prototypes of enterprises in the social economy. Associations, foundations and specific forms of social enterprises (such as social purpose companies in Belgium) are also recognized as such by most countries. In the new member states, mutual societies are often not seen as being part of the social economy, but according to the researchers, this is because of the fact that this legal form is absent in these countries and because of the fact that social economy as a concept isn't recognized as such (Monzón & Chaves, 2012). Aggregated figures for the social economy in Europe have not yet been constructed based on Satellite accounts (because of missing data for most European countries). However, based on data presented by national experts, a first sketch of the field of the social economy has been presented. In this, cooperatives, mutual societies and nonprofit associations are included. In addition, but also other types of organizations with similar principles and values are being mentioned (Monzón & Chaves, 2012).

Monzón & Chaves (2012) claim that 'social enterprises' are part of the social economy, however the social economy itself is broader than the collection of social enterprises. According to them the social economy "is made up of a wide range of operators which taken all together constitute a pole between the public sector and the capital-based sector" (Monzón & Chaves, 2012: 34). They distinguish between a market- and a non-market subsector of the social economy. In the market sector they identify what can be described as 'social enterprises': co-operatives, mutual societies, social economy

business groups, enterprises with legal forms other than co-operatives and mutual societies but operating on the market, according to the same principles, other social economy companies (such as labor companies), as well as non-profit institutions serving social economy entities. Private non-market producers, that is those organizations that supply the majority of their output free of charge or at prices that are not economically significant, are described as the non-market part of the social economy (Monzón & Chaves, 2012: 15-17).

EMES-researchers use the term 'social enterprises' (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010, 2013) to refer to "those organizations that are at the cross-roads of market, public policy and civil society" (Nyssens, 2006). According to Monzón & Chaves (2012) it refers to the market sub-sector of the social economy. Different research traditions focusing on 'social enterprises' have been investigated by Defourny & Nyssens (2010) and an EMES-definition of 'social enterprises' has been developed (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001) and refined (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013).

In the literature on social enterprises they are conceived as organizations that deploy entrepreneurial dynamics with primary social goals. They are active in a range of sectors and exist under a plurality of legal forms (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013). The European EMES-perspective considers social enterprises as enterprises who unfold entrepreneurial dynamics with the aim of achieving a social goal (for example at the domain of care, culture,...), in addition to which principles in the area of democratic decision-making and limitation of profit distribution are being followed (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013). In an ongoing comparative EMES-study of social enterprises (IUA 2012-2017) the coordinators develop an ideal typical definition of 'social enterprises' encompassing nine indicators systematically divided into three domains: the economic, the social and its internal governance (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013).

The three economic or entrepreneurial dimensions of social enterprises are:

1. A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services = continuous production and sale of goods or services

Social enterprises, unlike some traditional non-profit organizations, do not normally have advocacy activities or the redistribution of financial flows (as, for example, many foundations) as their major activity, but they are directly involved in the production of goods or the provision of services to people on a continuous basis. The productive activity thus represents the reason, or one of the main reasons, for the existence of social enterprises.

2. A significant level of economic risk

Those who establish a social enterprise assume totally or partly the risk inherent in the initiative. Unlike most public institutions, social enterprises' financial viability depends on the efforts of their members and workers to secure adequate resources.

3. A minimum amount of paid work

As in the case of most traditional non-profit organizations, social enterprises may also combine monetary and non-monetary resources, and voluntary and paid workers. However, the activity carried out in social enterprises requires a minimum level of paid workers.

The three social dimensions of social enterprises are:

4. An explicit aim to benefit the community

One of the principal aims of social enterprises is to serve the community or a specific group of people. In the same perspective, a feature of social enterprises is their desire to promote a sense of social responsibility at the local level.

5. An initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations

Social enterprises are the result of collective dynamics involving people belonging to a community or to a group that shares a well-defined need or aim; this collective dimension must be maintained over time in one way or another, even though the importance of leadership must not be neglected.

6. A limited profit distribution

The primacy of the social aim is reflected in a constraint on the distribution of profits. However, social enterprises do not only include organizations that are characterized by a total nondistribution constraint, but also organizations which - like cooperatives in many countries - may distribute profits, but only to a limited extent, thus allowing to avoid a profit-maximizing behavior.

The three internal governance dimensions of social enterprises are:

7. A high degree of autonomy

Social enterprises are created by a group of people on the basis of an autonomous project and they are governed by these people. They may depend on public subsidies but they are not managed, be it directly or indirectly, by public authorities or other organizations. They have both the right to take up their own position ("voice") and to terminate their activity ("exit").

8. A decision-making power not based on capital ownership

This criterion generally refers to the principle of "one member, one vote" or at least to a decision-making process in which voting power is not distributed according to capital shares on the governing body which has the ultimate decision-making rights.

9. A participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity

Representation and participation of users or customers, influence of various stakeholders on decision-making and a participative management often constitute important characteristics of social enterprises. In many cases, one of the aims of social enterprises is to further democracy at the local level through economic activity.

Defourny & Nyssens (2013) stress that these are ideal-typical features of social enterprises that constitute a tool, somewhat analogous to a compass, which helps analysts locate the position of the observed entities relative to one another and eventually identify subsets of social enterprises they want to study more deeply. Those indicators allow identifying brand new social enterprises, but they can also lead to designate as social enterprises older organizations being reshaped by new internal dynamics. In practice, these ideal-typical features are being approached in a greater or lesser extent. An organization can possess more or less of these features to a greater or lesser extent.

'Social enterprise' then refers to a plurality of organizations and initiatives who deploy economic activities with social goals. Essential is that these social goals are the primary motive for the economic activity. Scarce resources are being used to produce goods and services that meet real social needs and they are sold in the market for a price that covers the production costs, at least partially. This is what makes Monzón & Chaves (2012) state that using the term 'social enterprises' restricts the field of the social economy covered to its market subsector, excluding the non-market subsector. According to Defourny et al. (2001) the price paid in the market, however, may be lower than the costing price. In that case, social enterprises also receive non-market incomes (subsidies, donations, contributions). In fact, many initiatives in the social economy appeal on a mix of market- and non-market incomes (Defourny et al., 2001; Gijssels & Van den Broeck, 2008). Although, according to Defourny & Nyssens (2013), it is essential that there is a minimum of economic risk taken and a minimum of income generated in the market. In our quest for a theoretically driven but empirically validated delimitation of the population of social economy organizations, we will come back to this issue. In any case, the financial profit that is realized by the 'social enterprises' is used for the enduring and continuously ameliorated realization of these social goals. These goals are not something different from the goods and services produced and sold. They are themselves serving social needs. Fulfilling these social goals is the primary reason of existence of the enterprise (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013).

In all those definitions and approaches, social goals are not limited to employment and training of disadvantaged groups, social economy refers to more than the social insertion economy, and social enterprises refer to more than work integration enterprises. Social enterprises aim at satisfying social goals, which are not limited to the employment and training of disadvantaged groups.

3.2 Social economy and social enterprises: policy definitions

3.2.1 Policy in Flanders

In the coalition agreement of 1992, the Flemish government for the first time expressed the intention to support the social economy. The government did not provide a uniform definition or description of 'social economy', and fitted this de facto in the employment policy for disadvantaged groups, in particular for the underprivileged/risk groups and low-skilled long-term unemployed (De Mey et al., 2008).

In 1997 some 30 social economy initiatives formed a platform for the Social Economy in Flanders ('Vlaams Overleg Sociale Economie', or VOSEC in short) and subscribed the following definition of social economy:

"The social economy consists of a variety of enterprises and initiatives who put the achievement of certain social surpluses first and respect the following principles:

- *Priority of labor over capital*
- *Democratic decision-making*
- *Social embeddedness*
- *Transparency, quality and sustainability.*

Special attention is given to the internal and external relations. These enterprises produce and sell goods and/or services and are active in the market. They make efficient use of their resources, with the goal of insuring continuity and profitability."

Thus, also the definition of VOSEC is broader than the focus on employment of disadvantaged groups (Gijssels & Van den Broeck, 2008; De Mey et al., 2008; Marée, Gijssels et al., 2007). It does not provide a definition in terms of goals, but one in terms of values and principles of conduct to be followed by those enterprises and initiatives that are part of an economic field in which those values and principles prevail. It does not confine the social economy to the social insertion economy, but restricts the social economy to that part that Monzón & Chaves (2012) describe as the market subsector.

In accordance with policy, the leading document in Flanders concerning the delimitation of social economy is the new Decree on the 'Support of the Social Economy in Flanders' (approved by the Flemish Parliament on 8/2/2012). This decree states that:

"The social economy consists of a variety of enterprises and initiatives, who produce and sell goods and/or services on the market. For these goods and/or services, there is a real demand, who aim for continuity and profitability, and efficient use of their resources, putting first the achievement of certain social added values/surpluses and principles:

- *Creation and retention of employment, reinforcement of competences to stimulate sustainable careers and flows within the social economy and towards the Normal Economic Circuit (NEC), where possible. Attention is given to the labor market position of disadvantaged groups, emancipation, integration, competences and sustainable careers.*
- *Sustainable development, environmental-friendly production processes and products and integral environmental care.*
- *Priority of labor over capital with the distribution of profits. Profit-making isn't an individual or explicit goal, but a mean to realize the different social goals.*
- *Democratic decision-making.*
- *Maximal transparency, in the area of the general policy, finances and intern and extern relations.*
- *Quality of relations:*
 - *External relations: a win-win partnership is being pursued with a fair division of the costs and benefits according to equivalence and transparency.*
 - *Internal relations: attention is given to opportunities concerning personal development, non-discrimination and labor conditions of the staff.*
- *Societal embeddedness: by communicating with the local society and non-governmental organizations in the field, by networking and cooperation.*

This definition also confines the social economy to the market subsector, focusing on principles (last five bullet points) as well as on specific social aims or surpluses (first two bullet points). The first aim that social economy enterprises and initiatives can pursue, according to this definition, is the socio-professional integration of disadvantaged groups. The second aim, according to this definition, is the production of environmental-friendly products and services, or the environmental-friendly production of services, and the preservation of the environment. It is not clear whether the two types of goals are to be realized at once (we take it that it can be the one or the other), and whether the described social aims are to be realized according to all the principles mentioned (we take it to be the case). **HERE WE WILL INCLUDE A SENTENCE DESCRIBING THE VIEWPOINT OF THE POLICY MAKER, WHICH HE WILL PRESENT AT THE SECOND WORKSHOP TO BE HELD IN OCTOBRE.**

In 1995, the Belgian legislator has set up a transversal statute for entrepreneurship with a social purpose', the 'social purpose company'. This statute is transversal, this means that it can be adopted by each commercial/trading company, regardless of the legal form, under the condition that this organization adheres to some statutory obligations, who fit in with the cooperative principles and the principles of the social economy (Coates, Van Steenberge & Deneef, 2008; Deneef, 2004; Gijssels, Coates & Deneef, 2011; Gijssels & Van Opstal, 2008b). These 'organizations with a social purpose' can be pre-eminently seen as 'social enterprises', but they are not to be seen as the sole 'social enterprises' in Belgium. Despite this new and specific legislation concerning social enterprises, in Belgium 'non-profit organizations' are traditionally being set up to realize public interest or social goals, for example offering social services. In the broad definition of 'enterprise', that is being put forward in the 'Design Lawbook of Economic Law (FOD Justitie, 2009), non-profit organizations who unfold commercial, financial or industrial activities are also a part of the group of organizations that are being described as 'enterprises'.

3.2.2 European policy

The European Commission increasingly recognizes the role played by and the specific character of the social economy and its enterprises and initiatives and developed a framework for the support and treatment of the social enterprises that are part of it: the Social Business Initiative and the Proposal for the Regulation on Social Entrepreneurship Funds. It seems that the European Commission⁴ has been inspired by the EMES-definition, defining social enterprises as enterprises who devote their activities to the realization of social objectives and re-invest their profits to achieve broader social or social goals, for their members and/or for the broader society.

According to the European Commission, the economic or entrepreneurial character of these initiatives is being marked by:

- A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services
- A high degree of autonomy
- A significant level of economic risk
- A minimum amount of paid work

According to the European Commission, the social dimension of these initiatives is being marked by:

- The initiative is launched by a group or an organization of citizens
- The decision-making power is not based on capital ownership
- A participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity
- Limited profit distribution
- An explicit aim to benefit the community

Despite their diversity, social enterprises operate mainly in the following three fields:

- Work integration (training and integration of unemployed persons);
- Personal services (e.g. childcare services, services for elderly people, 'proximity' services, aid for disadvantaged people);
- Local development of disadvantaged areas (e.g. social enterprises in remote rural areas, neighborhood development/rehabilitation schemes in urban areas).

This definition also focusses on organizations in the market subsector of the social economy, describing characteristics of their entrepreneurial character as well as principles of governance and treatment of profits, and defining clear fields or social aims: work integration, personal services, local development of disadvantaged areas. As such, the definition is more restrictive than the one provided by the Flemish government in her Decree on the 'Support of the Social Economy in Flanders'.

The European Commission acknowledges that social enterprises can be found in different legal models or forms, and that there is no single legal model for these enterprises. According to the European Commission, many social enterprises are registered as private companies, others come in the form of social co-operatives, nonprofit associations, voluntary organizations, charities or mutual

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/social-economy/social-enterprises/>

societies, or newly developed legal forms for 'social purpose companies' (such as developed in Belgium), and some organizations are unincorporated.

The Social Business Initiative is, in a policy view, an important document to define and delimit the field of the social economy to be supported and treated in a specific way, containing a definition of 'social enterprises' acknowledged by the European Commission. The European Commission defines social enterprises as enterprises:⁵

- Whose primary objective is to achieve social impact rather than generating profit for owners and stakeholders (creation of surplus values on the domain of ecology, for the broader society or the local community);
- which use its surpluses mainly to achieve these social goals;
- which are managed by social entrepreneurs in an accountable, transparent and innovative way, in particular by involving workers, customers and stakeholders affected by its business activity.

According to the European Commission, social enterprises are 'businesses providing social services and/or goods and services to vulnerable persons (access to housing, health care, assistance for elderly or disabled persons, inclusion of vulnerable groups, child care, access to employment and training, dependency management, etc.); and/or businesses with a method of production of goods or services with a social objective (social and professional integration via access to employment for people disadvantaged in particular by insufficient qualifications or social or professional problems leading to exclusion and marginalization) but whose activity may be outside the realm of the provision of social goods or services' (European Commission, 2011).⁶

This year (2013), the European Commission presented a 'Guide to the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship', by which the Commission aims to give more insight into the social economy and the enterprises which are active in this particular part of the economy. Social economy and social enterprises are regarded as an important source of inspiration for recovery for Europe, which is undergoing a deep unemployment and social crisis. Researchers from EURICSE (European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises) conducted the work for this guide (Borzaga, Bodini, Salvatori & Galera).

In this guide, the European Commission makes a difference between the social economy, and the enterprises that are traditionally part of this social economy, namely cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations and associations. The novelty introduced by social enterprises is their capacity to bring an entrepreneurial and commercial dimension to the provision of general interest services and to the solution of social issues. When compared to traditional social economy organizations, social enterprises may be seen as more oriented towards addressing not only the needs of their owners or members, but also of the entire community, as they put more emphasis on the dimension of general interest, rather than purely mutuality goals. They provide a variety of services of general interest, including for instance health care, child care and educational services (European Commission, 2013).

3.3 Comparison of academic and policy definitions and delimitation of a population of social economy organizations in Flanders

3.3.1 *Definitions compared*

In the following table we systematically compare the core elements of the different academic and policy definitions presented above. This systematic comparison will then be used as a starting point for a discussion with representatives of social economy policy makers and representative bodies of

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/social_business/docs/201205-sbi-leaflet_en.pdf

⁶ With the Social Business Initiative, the European Commission wants to support these social enterprises and their way of organizing and working, by mapping them and increase their visibility, by improving access to funding and design an adjusted regulatory framework. The Member States as well as the regions are encouraged to make a contribution. This Social Business Initiative is a coordinated action of the Commission, it's collaboration between the commission president, DG Industry and Entrepreneurship, DG Internal Market and Services and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission, 2011). With this, the European Commission acknowledges that social enterprises are more than social employment and inclusion, but have these and other social goals as main reason of existence, and operate according to the principles of democracy, participation and social justice, thereby deserving an adjusted treatment and legislation.

enterprises and initiatives that, according to the academic definitions, are likely to be recognized as social economy actors. The question being whether their member organizations, and which of them, are indeed perceived – by those representatives – as social economy actors, and can – taken together – be seen as a valid contemporary foundation for a monitor of the social economy that represents a lived reality in Flanders.

	Field definition	Academic views		Policy definitions	
	VOSEC	EMES	CIRIEC	Decree on the Support of the Social Economy in Flanders	Description of 'social enterprises' on the website of the European Commission (*)
Types of organizations included	A variety of enterprises and initiatives	A variety of 'social enterprises', that is initiatives launched by a group of citizens or by civil society organizations	A variety of private, formally organized enterprises + Private organizations providing non-market services for households	A variety of enterprises and initiatives	A variety of 'social enterprises'
Market / non-market subsector, or both	Market	Market	Market + non market	Market	Market
Description of social purpose	'Certain social purposes' – <i>not further specified</i>	'Aim to benefit the community' – <i>not further specified</i>	'Meet the needs of the members' – 'by providing services (<i>not further specified</i>), insurance and finance + non-market services (<i>not further specified</i>) for households	Creation and retention of employment, reinforcement of competences to stimulate sustainable careers and flows within the social economy and towards the Normal Economic Circuit (NEC), where possible. Attention is given to the labor market position of disadvantaged groups, emancipation, integration, competences and sustainable careers + Sustainable development, environmental-friendly production processes and products and integral environmental care.	Social impact rather, that is creation of surplus values in the domain of ecology, for the broader society or for a local community; In the following three fields: – Work integration; – Personal services; – Local development of disadvantaged areas.
Entrepreneurial characteristics	Active in the market, Making efficient use of resources, Ensuring continuity and profitability	A continuous production and sale of goods or services A significant level of economic risk A minimum amount of paid work	<i>Not specified</i>	Produce and sell goods and/or services on the market. For these goods and/or services, there is a real demand. Maximal continuity and profitability Efficient use of their resources	A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services A significant level of economic risk A minimum amount of paid work
Principles regarding the treatment of surpluses	Priority of labor over capital, Put the achievement of social surpluses first	Limited profit distribution For the benefit of the community	- In market subsector: distribution of profits is not directly linked to capital ownership. - In non-market subsector: added values or surpluses	Priority of labor over capital with the distribution of profits. Profit-making isn't an individual or explicit goal, but a mean to realize the different social goals.	Limited profit distribution For the benefit of the community

			are not distributed to economic agents who create, control or finance them		
Principles with respect to governance	<p>1. Democratic decision-making</p> <p>2. Social embeddedness</p> <p>3. Transparency, quality and sustainability.</p> <p>Special attention is given to the internal and external relations.</p>	<p>An initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations</p> <p>A high degree of autonomy</p> <p>A decision-making power not based on capital ownership</p> <p>A participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity</p>	<p>Decision autonomy and freedom of membership, Decision-making is not directly linked to capital ownership or membership contributions.</p> <p>Each member has one vote.</p>	<p>Democratic decision-making. Maximal transparency, in the area of the general policy, finances and internal and external relations.</p> <p>Quality of relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - external relations: partnership with costs and benefits equally divided according to equivalence and transparency. - Internal relations: attention is given to opportunities concerning personal development, non-discrimination and labor conditions of the staff. <p>Societal embeddedness: by communicating with the local society and non-governmental organizations in the field, by networking and cooperation.</p>	<p>The initiative is launched by a group or an organization of citizens</p> <p>The decision-making power is not based on capital ownership</p> <p>A participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity</p>

(*) <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/social-economy/social-enterprises/>

As is clear from the comparison of definitions in the table above, the definitions have some common core elements as well as some distinctive specifications.

With the exception of the CIRIEC-definition, all definitions investigated refer to a *wide variety* of enterprises and initiatives *producing and selling goods or services in a continuous and profitable way*, asking a price for it (albeit this price may be far below production costs). With the exception of the CIRIEC definition, all definitions studied refer to enterprises and initiatives that are *active on the market*.

A further specification of the economic character of social enterprises is present in the EMES- and EC-definitions, stating that the organizations should have a *minimum of paid labor*. It is argued to be an important and crucial criterion of 'social enterprises', since employment can be seen as key part of risk taking and central to the production and selling of goods and/or services in the market, thus of 'entrepreneurship'.

All definitions state that the *social goal*, or the *goal to benefit the community* (which can be a community of members or a larger local community or society) is the main objective of the enterprise or initiative, and the very reason of its existence. The policy definitions are more specific than the others with respect to the description of fields of activity, though the specifications of the Flemish government and the European Commission are not completely in line with one another. Both refer to work integration, but on top of that, the Flemish government refers to sustainable (in terms of the preservation of the environment) development and production, whereas the European Commission refers to personal services and local development of disadvantaged areas.

All definitions claim that *profit* is not a goal in itself, but a *means to realize, on a continuous basis, the social goal(s)*. The Flemish definitions (both the field and the policy definition) also mention the principle of priority of labor over capital.

All definitions state that the enterprises and initiatives in the social economy have a *participatory character*. *Decision-making is democratically organized*, with decision-making power not based on capital ownership. The distribution of voting rights varies from the principle 'one person - one vote', to a limitation of voting rights at the general assembly, thus limiting the power of majority shareholders. Actors that are in a way affected by the enterprise's activity are involved in the decision making process. The Flemish definitions (both the field and policy definitions) also mention transparency and the quality of the internal and external relations (relations with internal and external stakeholders) as important principles driving enterprises and initiatives in the social economy.

We confronted representatives of policy makers and representative bodies of enterprises and initiatives that, in theory, can be seen as prototypical for the social economy, with our analysis of these definitions and developed, in a dialogical process, criteria for the concrete distinction of those organizations that, a priori, can be recognized social economy actors and thereby form the population for our monitor.

3.3.2 First reaction of policy makers and key figures in the field

A first focus group with social economy policy makers, representatives of work integration enterprises (WISE's), representatives of the cooperative field as well as the social profit, was held on May 7, 2013. Two important conclusions came out of this first focus group:

1. There is a need for a conceptualization that is not only theoretical, but that indeed refers to a lived reality. The organizations that were present at the focus group argued that the definitions and criteria in literature and policy documents are often theoretical, but do not refer to the reality.
2. There is a need for objective and clear and measurable criteria, since, for a lot of organizations in the field, it is not entirely clear whether they are part of the social economy or not. Moreover, some companies with legal forms that are generally used 'for profit' in fact do operate according to social economy or cooperative principles. Two important questions arise:
 - a. What makes the entrepreneurial character of an organization?
 - b. What is a social goal or social purpose of an organization? When is an organization operating and governed in a social way?

Thus, we formulated more clear and concrete criteria for distinguishing social enterprises and initiatives in the social economy from others, clarifying and operationalizing the entrepreneurial and the

social features of those enterprises and initiatives. These criteria, as well as the result of our discussion⁷, are described in the following paragraph.

3.3.3 *Criteria for the delimitation of social enterprises*

Entrepreneurial character

From the Design Lawbook of Economic Law (FOD Justitie, 2009), the definition of 'enterprises' in the Crossroads Bank of Organizations (KBO) in Belgium, as well as the definitions of EMES and the European Commission (2011, 2013) we extracted 4 criteria of the entrepreneurial character of social enterprises:

- Continuous commercial, financial or industrial activities, as well as practicing 'acts of trade'.
- Being VAT-obliged.
- A minimum amount (>50%) of paid work (self-employed and/or with employees).
- Generating a minimum (>50%) of market-incomes.

Social character

We further distinguish different criteria concerning the social character of these enterprises. These criteria are in line with the EMES criteria/definition (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013) and the definition of the European Commission in the Social Business Initiative (European Commission, 2011), as well as in the 'Guide for the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship' (European Commission, 2013). These criteria concern the social mission of the enterprise, as well as its internal governance.

Social mission:

1. A clear description of a social goal/an explicit social aim in the by-laws, mission and vision of the organization.

This can be in the field of:

- Social employment (e.g. Work Integration Social Enterprises);
- Personal services (for example child care, care for the elderly, aid for disabled persons,...);
- Local development of disadvantaged areas.

In accordance with the definition of the Flemish community we also propose to add activities in the field of sustainable development and environmental protection and preservation, provided that they are economic production activities, that is production and selling of goods and services.

In accordance with the delimitation of fields of social purposes for social cooperatives in the Italian Law on Social Cooperatives⁸, as well as the criteria for the assignment of tax exemptions for nonprofit organizations in Belgium⁹, we also discussed the possibility of activities in the following areas, provided that they are economic production activities:

1. Education and training
2. Culture, sports and leisure
3. Scientific research
4. Humanitarian aid to victims of disasters and wars
5. Development cooperation

2. Limited profit distribution

No profit distribution (e.g. non-profit organizations) or a limited profit distribution: a maximum of 6% (e.g. recognized cooperatives and companies with a social aim) (avoiding a profit-maximizing behavior).

3. An initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations.

⁷ We will add the results of our discussion in the second focusgroup, which will take place on October 7, 2013 in a final version of this paper to be presented at the CIRIEC-conference.

⁸ Law 381 (1991).

⁹ www.fiscus.fgov.be

Governance/decision-making

1. A high degree of autonomy

The initiatives are created by a group of people on the basis of an autonomous project and they are governed by these people. However they may receive public subsidies and other non-market incomes, they are not managed by politic or other organizations.

2. A decision-making power not based on capital ownership

One person - one vote, or limitation of the voting right at the general assembly

3. A participatory nature, which involves different stakeholders

Participation of members, users, customers in the decision-making (board of directors, general assembly,...). Participative labor organization.

4. Conclusion

Based on academic literature and the definitions of social enterprises in these documents, definitions of social enterprise in policy documents, in Flanders as well as in Europe, and consultation of the representatives of types of organizations that in the literature are seen as prototypes of social enterprises en initiatives, we defined four criteria concerning their economic or entrepreneurial character, as well as six criteria concerning their social character (including the internal governance aspect). They were operationalized in order to get a clear view of what organizations are to be included in the list of social economy actors which is intended to be the foundation of our elaborated monitor of the social economy in Flanders 2013.

Thus, the population of social economy actors encompassed by our monitor will have the following ten features:

1. Continuous commercial, financial or industrial activities, as well as practicing 'acts of trade'.
2. Being VAT-obliged.
4. A minimum amount (>50%) of paid work (self-employed and/or with employees).
5. Generating a minimum (>50%) of market-incomes.
6. A clear description of a social goal/an explicit social aim in the by-laws, mission and vision of the organization.
7. No or a limited profit distribution – max. 6% (cf. the criteria for the accreditation of cooperatives and for social purpose companies in Belgium).
8. An initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organizations.
9. A high degree of autonomy: autonomous project governed by stakeholders involved.
10. A decision-making power not based on capital ownership: one person – one vote, or restriction of voting rights at the general assembly to 10% (cf. the criteria for the accreditation of cooperatives and for social purpose companies in Belgium).
11. Participation of relevant stakeholders in decision making structures, participatory labor organization.

An important strength of our approach is that our construction of the population for the monitor of the social economy 2013 in Flanders is scientifically grounded, as well as representing a recognized reality, validated by representatives of types of organizations that, in theory, are generally understood as prototypes of 'social enterprises'. The more specific operationalization of the theoretical criteria, in line with the literature and validated by key figures in the field, allows to establish a repertory of social economy actors for which data can be gathered and analyzed in order to describe their character and impact. It can also support the development of more social enterprises and of a self-conscious social economy: from a social economy *an sich* to a social economy *für sich*.

Evidently, the population of our monitor is thus a time and space specific construction, depending on evolutions in concept and meaning given and actual organizational developments in the field. Since this is in constant evolution, the population of the monitor needs to be updated on a regular base, always in dialogue with key figures in the field.

5. Further research steps

In a next step, the different representative organizations of the social enterprises will provide us with a list of enterprises who, to a greater or lesser extent, meet these criteria or features. By providing us with their names and a unique identification number (KBO-number), we can trace these enterprises in the administrative data-sets. In that way, a theoretical funded sample (panel or enterprises) will be composed, for which data will be extracted in the national administrative datasets at one hand, and by

who a survey will be taken with regarding to indicators of realized social added values (see the second aim of the elaboration of the monitor for the social economy in Flanders).

With that, we will construct a flexible and dynamic monitor which contains a panel of enterprises which can be defined as 'social enterprises', and act as social enterprises, and for which we can sample information about who they are, what they do, how they do it and which added value they create by doing this. The expected timing to construct this broad, realistic and dynamic monitor is two years, so that at the end of 2015 this monitor for Flanders will be available.

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