European Commission

Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy

How to submit your pledge

A guide for Proximity and Social Economy Stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social economy

What is the Transition Pathway for the proximity and social economy?

The European Commission, together with around 400 stakeholders, published a [Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy Ecosystem](#) in November 2022. This is a dynamic roadmap to support the green and digital transitions of the ecosystem, while improving its resilience. This builds on the ecosystem's already strong contribution to sustainable and socially responsible practices, including the provision of goods and services for a wide range of economic sectors linked to circular economy, health and care services, culture, renewable energy and social and affordable housing.

Figure 1: The 14 Action Areas of the Transition Pathway

Green transition	Digital transition
Reinforcing business to business collaboration for greener and circular value chains	New business models – the platform economy
Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models	Data maturity and data driven business models
Certification, labelling and self-regulation	Public and private tech partnerships and support
Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy	Data sharing, data management and code of conduct
Greening infrastructures and business operations	Supporting digital social innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship
Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives	Access to technology
Addressing capacity and skills gap	Boosting digital skills by and in the social economy

[Learn more about the Proximity and Social Economy](#)
[Learn more about all the 14 industrial ecosystems and the broader goals of the Transition Pathway](#)

How can you show your commitment?

Pledge your support for the green and digital transitions

To make the Transition Pathway a reality, all stakeholders in the ecosystem – public and private – are encouraged to commit concretely through a system of pledges for specific activities in line with the pathway's goals.

The first stakeholder pledges[1] were released in May 2023. However, the call remains open on a rolling basis, providing an opportunity for stakeholders to influence the future of the ecosystem in line with the goals of the European Green Deal[2] and Digital Compass for 2030[3].

View existing pledges and submit yours

Pledges are voluntary commitments expressed by actors to highlight how they plan to advance the green and digital transitions, address existing gaps, pool resources, and mobilize support to achieve their objectives.

Pledges should demonstrate concrete actions you will take in order to help achieve the 14 shared action areas identified in the Transition Pathway.

Why pledge?

- Demonstrate leadership as early adopters

- Inspire and get inspired by the broader European community with new ideas and initiatives

- Be an ambassador of the transition, from theory to practice

- Drive progress through collective action

- Help build evidence on commitments and concrete actions

- Create synergies with other stakeholders, also outside of your country

- Provide input to identify and prioritize specific key areas in policy and the private sector, and develop concrete solutions to address any gaps

- Connect with others who are working on similar topics.

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[1] The first batches of the pledges can be found on the website of the European Commission, https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/transition-pathway/pledges_en

[2] More information about the European Green Deal can be found here https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[3] More information about the Digital Compass can be found here https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

How to write a pledge?

Use the following guidelines to **develop and structure concrete commitments and effectively communicate them**. A well-crafted pledge outlines both the stakeholders' commitment and ensures it aligns with the broader objectives of the Transition Pathway.

Five steps to prepare a successful pledge:

1. Read and Innovate
Read through the Transition pathway with an open and innovative mind. Familiarise yourself with the Transition Pathway and get inspired by the core objectives. Ask yourself, how does my organisation fit within these objectives?

2. Reflect on Strategy
Reflect on your organisation's strategy and objectives vs. the transition pathway.
- **Determine what your organisation can do** to further the goals of the Transition Pathway by way of short-term goals with measurable impact. Write these goals down in clear language using the SMART principles (see below).
- **Define an Action Plan for your pledge** including the timeframe, actions, deadlines. Include a section on resources required for implementation and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) to track your progress. Ensure that the proposed actions are practical and feasible, considering available resources and timeline.

3. Collaborate and Plan
Collaborate with your workers, members, partners to decide what action makes the best sense long-term for your organisation and what its target should be.
- **Think about your network and beyond.** How will your pledge stimulate collaboration or participation and interaction among stakeholders in your network or other ecosystems? Highlight how the pledge will operate in synergy with other EU initiatives and industrial ecosystems (and include website links where possible). Explain how the pledge will facilitate engagement and idea exchange among diverse stakeholders and cross-sectorial ecosystems.

4. Formulate Concrete Pledges
Formulate one or more concrete pledges, including:
- A concrete action you are implementing or launching for the upcoming years.
- A concrete target for 2025/2030 + relevant steps.
- Address the main link with the pathway, either to a specific action or as a contribution to overall objectives (green, digital) or by adding a new way ('other action area').

5. Submit Your Pledge
Send in the submission via the online form.

After you have pledged, **showcase your progress** on your company website and social media channels and include the link so others can follow and contribute to your journey.

How to use the SMART approach?

S – Specific

Define what actions you will take and provide details. Who will do what? What do you expect to happen and in what timeframe?

M – Measurable

Define how you measure the success of your pledge. Use Key Performance Indicators. Ask yourself what you can measure and at what frequency will you check this data?

A – Attainable

Is your pledge realistic? Ensure your pledge reflects the available resources within your organization. Consider contingency plans in case of changes in resources.

R - Relevant

Is your pledge relevant to the European Commission's Transition Pathway objectives? How can you demonstrate the relevance?

T - Time-bound

Define and detail a concrete timeline for pledge implementation, include action items, milestones and deadlines.

A few examples of well-structured pledges can be found at the end of these guidelines.

What happens after you pledge?

The Commission is continuously evaluating pledges received, including specific commitments from both for-profit and non-profit entities to support the Transition Pathway. Before approval and publication on the website, the European Commission will assess your pledge based on the SMART approach outlined above to ensure it is well-defined and actionable. If more information is required, the European Commission or a contractor on their behalf will ask clarification questions.

Published pledges will be analysed in a comprehensive report on the state of the art of the Transition Pathway, that will consider the progress and implementation of the pledges and highlight success stories, best practices and innovative strategies. **Your pledge could be one of them!**

Submit your pledge

Need help with your pledge?
For more info and support, please contact **GROW-SOCIAL-ENTERPRISE@ec.europa.eu**

Get inspired: examples of pledges in different fields

Here you can find some examples of pledges for a selected sample of action areas of the Transition Pathway for the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem. Each example includes specific objectives, an action plan, and considerations for collaboration and interlinkages aligned with the key components of a successful pledge.

Example 1: A pledge in the field of social inclusion and employment

Action area	**Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration**
Context	**ENSIE, the European Network for Social Integration Enterprises**, represents the interests of national and regional networks of 'Work Integration Social Enterprises' (WISEs). These enterprises strive for more inclusive and integrated forms of employment at the European level. ENSIE works to promote social and professional integration of disadvantaged individuals through economic activity.
Pledge	In 2023, ENSIE pledges to work within ENSIE's members, the Social Tech 4 EU project and RREUSE on the collaboration between social enterprises and "regular" enterprises to develop synergies. It aims to foster at least 5 quality exchanges between regular and social enterprises (meaning, 3 exchange meetings, a collaboration of at least 6 months). Moreover, through the B2B focused project, BuyWisely - which has been awarded, ENSIE aims to raise awareness on the added value of "buy social", encourage involvement of MBs to support up/re-skilling pathways of disadvantaged groups to facilitate their access into the ordinary labour market; strengthen the operational and financial capacity of WISEs to cooperate with MBs, the so-called "trade readiness"; develop transactional partnerships through concrete actions between WISEs and MBs. The consortium will organize B2B fairs in Austria, 1 in the Netherlands, 1 in Italy and 2 in Ireland in 2024. Moreover, in 2024 the already existing B2B database will be updated. Furthermore, peer to peer sessions will be organized and policy recommendations will be drafted in the same year.
Key elements	**Relevance and Alignment:** The pledge aims to foster collaboration between social enterprises and regular enterprises to create synergies, promote social integration, and enhance the operational capacity of WISEs. **Objectives and Goals:** Facilitate at least 5 quality exchanges between regular and social enterprises, raise awareness about the value of "buy social," and support up/re-skilling pathways for disadvantaged groups to access the labor market. **Action Plan and Collaboration:** Engage through B2B fairs in Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, and Ireland in 2024, update the B2B database, organize peer-to-peer sessions, and draft policy recommendations.

Action area	Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models
Context	**The European Microfinance Network (EMN) i**s a leading network of organizations and businesses across the EU, dedicated to supporting the microfinance sector. EMN plays a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion by providing micro and small social entrepreneurs with both financial and non-financial support.
Pledge	According to the EMN-MFC last overview survey, 71% of MFIs offer loans for financing green solution and green technologies and only 27% provide non-financial services to support their clients in their green transition. The microfinance sector has the capacity and the expertise to support micro and small social entrepreneurs with financial and non-financial support. EMN will support its members in developing mainstream products. By end 2025, EMN hopes to see 80% of microfinance institutions with green microfinances products and 50% of them will have set up non-financial services to support the green transition of micro and small social entrepreneurs. To achieve these levels by end 2025, EMN will work towards this achievement with capacity building initiatives (webinars, trainings, peer to peer exchange, study visits between our members) and advocacy actions to ensure the availability of financial instruments for MFIs to develop these products for social economy entrepreneurs. EMN will monitor the results via its yearly overview survey but also through its various capacity building projects which will allow it to keep a pulse on the initiatives and deployment of new financial and non-financial services to the microentrepreneurs.
Key elements	**Relevance and Alignment:** The pledge aims to enhance the capacity of microfinance institutions (MFIs) to support the green transition of micro and small social entrepreneurs. This aligns with EMN's mission to promote financial inclusion and sustainability within the social economy sector. **Objectives and Goals:** By the end of 2025, ensure that 80% of microfinance institutions offer green microfinance products, and 50% provide non-financial services to support the green transition of their clients. This will involve developing mainstream products and expanding the support framework for social entrepreneurs. **Action Plan and Collaboration:** EMN will achieve these objectives through capacity-building initiatives such as webinars, training sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges, and study visits among its members. EMN will undertake advocacy actions to secure financial instruments necessary for developing these products. The progress will be monitored via the yearly overview survey and various capacity-building projects to keep track of the deployment of new financial and non-financial services to micro-entrepreneurs.

Example 3: A pledge in the field of tourism

Action area	Certification, labelling and self-regulation
Context	**Venezia Autentica (VA)** is a social enterprise that uses social innovation and digital technologies to make it easy and fun for visitors to have a quality experience in Venice while making a positive impact locally. They empower local businesses and travelers by creating a system, based also on an authenticity label, that bridges the gap between them. Visitors can therefore have a more authentic and more meaningful experience that directly supports local businesses. This is important as it benefits the quality of tourism and the local economy and helps to preserve the local community, culture, identity and environment.
Pledge	VA will upgrade its certification frameworks by 2025 to fulfill or exceed European 2030 and 2050 targets, with an emphasis on green goals. VA's label is given to local social economy and proximity actors who subscribe to all sustainability pillars (social, cultural, economic, environmental and cultural). All recipients are given a presence on a highly reputed digital platform and qualified market access. By 2025, a fresh certification campaign will begin every two years.
Key elements	**Relevance and Alignment:** The pledge enhances Venice tourism quality through social innovation and digital technologies, empowering local businesses and travelers via an authenticity label. **Objectives and Goals:** Upgrade certification frameworks by 2025 to meet/exceed European 2030 and 2050 targets, emphasizing green goals. **Action Plan and Collaboration:** Engage local businesses and travelers, provide digital platform presence, and start a new certification campaign every two years starting in 2025.

Example 4: A pledge in the field of Agri-food

Action area	Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship
Context	**The Open Food Network (OFN)** is a global network aiming to transition the food system by reconnecting producers and consumers. The network actively operates in 20 countries and has developed open-source software enabling farmers to set up online stores in collaboration with other producers. The digitalisation of farmers' markets allows in turn the creation of innovative, independent and community-based food enterprises. OFN Europe is a regional branch active in the EU.
Pledge	OFN Europe, are going to support the Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship through the development in Europe for farmers and small shop an open-source online trading platform enabling food and drink farmers to promote their products, distribute each other's products and sell their products through an increasing network of food hubs, community shops, markets and food co-ops. Open-source e-commerce can adapt to the needs of farmers and small shops. Making sure you can improve the digitization process. Within OFN there are functions to be able to favour the distribution of food in a short chain even for people with less economic resources through vouchers connected to the public system and an almost free price of the OFN platform for the farmers. To be able to promote the pledge, training and promotion of the platform among farmers will be carried out, from 2023 until 2024. More than 25 training/presentation events on the platform will be carried out in more than 10 European countries.
Key elements	**Relevance and Alignment:** The pledge aims to transition the food system by reconnecting producers and consumers through digital social innovation and open-source technology, enhancing the digitization of farmers' markets and community-based food enterprises. **Objectives and Goals:** Develop an open-source online trading platform for farmers and small shops in Europe, enabling them to promote and distribute their products, improving food distribution and supporting those with fewer economic resources. **Action Plan and Collaboration:** Engage farmers and small shops through training and promotion of the platform, with over 25 training/presentation events in more than 10 European countries from 2023 to 2024.