

1 Agenda and objectives

The aim of this session, organised by the European Commission (DG GROW), was to discuss the proximity and social economy ecosystem and the possible scenarios for its transition pathway and what role cities can play in it. **Alessia di Gregorio**, Deputy Head of Unit on Proximity, Social Economy & Creative Industries, DG GROW, and **Hanna Zdanowska**, Mayor of the City of Lodz, Poland, and Member of the European Committee of the Regions were speakers at the event. **Dana Eleftheriadou**, Head of Proximity and Cities Team, DG GROW, moderated the session. Cities and Lead experts participating in the [Intelligent Cities Challenge initiative](#) as well as members of the Committee of the Regions were invited to join the session.

The session was structured around the agenda below:

Table 1 Agenda of the session

Time	Agenda item
11.00 – 11.05	Introduction and welcome, European Commission
11.05 – 11.20	Proximity and Social Economy Ecosystem and the scenarios for the Transition Pathway, European Commission
11.20 – 11.25	Committee of the Regions, Mayor of the city of Lodz
11.25 – 11.55	Open discussion
11.55 – 12.00	Q&A's and next steps

2 Topics

2.1 Proximity and Social Economy Ecosystem

Alessia di Gregorio, Deputy Head of Unit on Proximity, Social Economy & Creative Industries, DG GROW, introduced the topic of the transition pathways that the European Commission currently is putting in place for the 14 Industrial Ecosystems identified in the [Industrial Strategy](#). The pathways serve as an actionable plan for the transition of industrial ecosystems leading to co-created project pipelines, policy actions and stakeholder pledges along the focus areas of resilience, green transition and digital transition.

Cities play a key role on the twin transition since they implement the policies at the closest level to the ground, play a key role in supporting business and are the first reference to citizens.

As part of the design of the transition pathways for the proximity and social economy ecosystem, DG GROW launched a [consultation](#) and encouraged all participants to share their views. The consultation will be closed on the 28th of February 2022.

Hanna Zdanowska, Mayor of the city of Lodz, Poland, and Member of CoR, presented how over the past six years the city of Lodz has transformed from being an industrial city to a city for the citizens. She explained the revitalisation process with the support of the social sector thanks to the use of new technology and businesses taking part proximity and social economy actors. She stated that at the end of the transformation, the city is envisaged to be closer connected to citizens and their needs and highlighted the economic benefits that will come from it.

2.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

Both speakers, **Alessia di Gregorio** and **Mayor Zdanowska**, underlined the importance of involving and having the support of all local stakeholders to achieve the transformation goals defined. They also mention the importance of raising awareness and communicating about the goals to the citizens, to better highlight the economic, social and wellbeing benefits that comes with the transformation.

The involvement of all relevant parties at the local-level, stakeholders, and citizens alike, will help cities in their aim to create a resilient and human-centric city model evolving around collaborative governance schemes and the participation of citizens. It will also benefit local businesses since it creates a supportive business environment, increasing the impact of public investments on the transition pathways.

2.3 The Green and Digital Transition

Another point discussed was the green and digital transition: The benefits of jointly pursuing the two green and digital transitions was highlighted. Further to this, **Mayor Zdanowska** advised to use collective pledges, eco pacts and public-private collaborations for these transitions, where business and cities get together and agree on concrete ambitions and on the steps to achieve them jointly. Dana Eleftheriadou equally voiced the potential of eco-pacts and proposed to consider it also as an activity for ICC cities. The main points from the session on the Green and Digital Transition is that it's essential these transitions are done in tandem and that there are real economic benefits once these transitions are successfully implemented.

2.4 Discussion

Participant	Messages
Mirko van Vliet, Strategic Advisor, Amsterdam Economic Board, Amsterdam Metropolitan Area	Mirko van Vliet advised to design and propose various scenarios since there is not a single way to boost and support the proximity and social economy ecosystems. He presented the LEAP platform , its triple helix actors and its distributed data centres. This data has resulted in four scenarios for the future. The LEAP initiative is developing distributed datacentres in the region of Amsterdam Metropolitan Area.
Lena Tsipouri, Lead Expert, Cities of Patras, Trikala and Tripolis	Lena Tsipouri talked about the importance of putting in place a monitoring and evaluation system that would address the benefits of the green and digital transition at city level. Assessing the benefits would make it easier for stakeholders and relevant parties to understand the profit of its implementation. She also mentioned that policy is the big barrier for the implementation of transitions, therefore it is important to introduce this type of thinking so that local politicians and stakeholders can better understand why they should implement said measures and the benefits of doing so.
Colm Mc Colgan, General Manager at ERNACT	Colm Mc Colgan highlighted the unawareness among cities of the tools that the European Commission has made available for cities, and that can support in the twin transition. Likewise, he mentioned that often the social economy concept is unknown to the cities and do not understand the potential of the social economy in combination with green and digital topics. More awareness raising campaigns are needed to present to cities the full potential of the already available tools and policies.