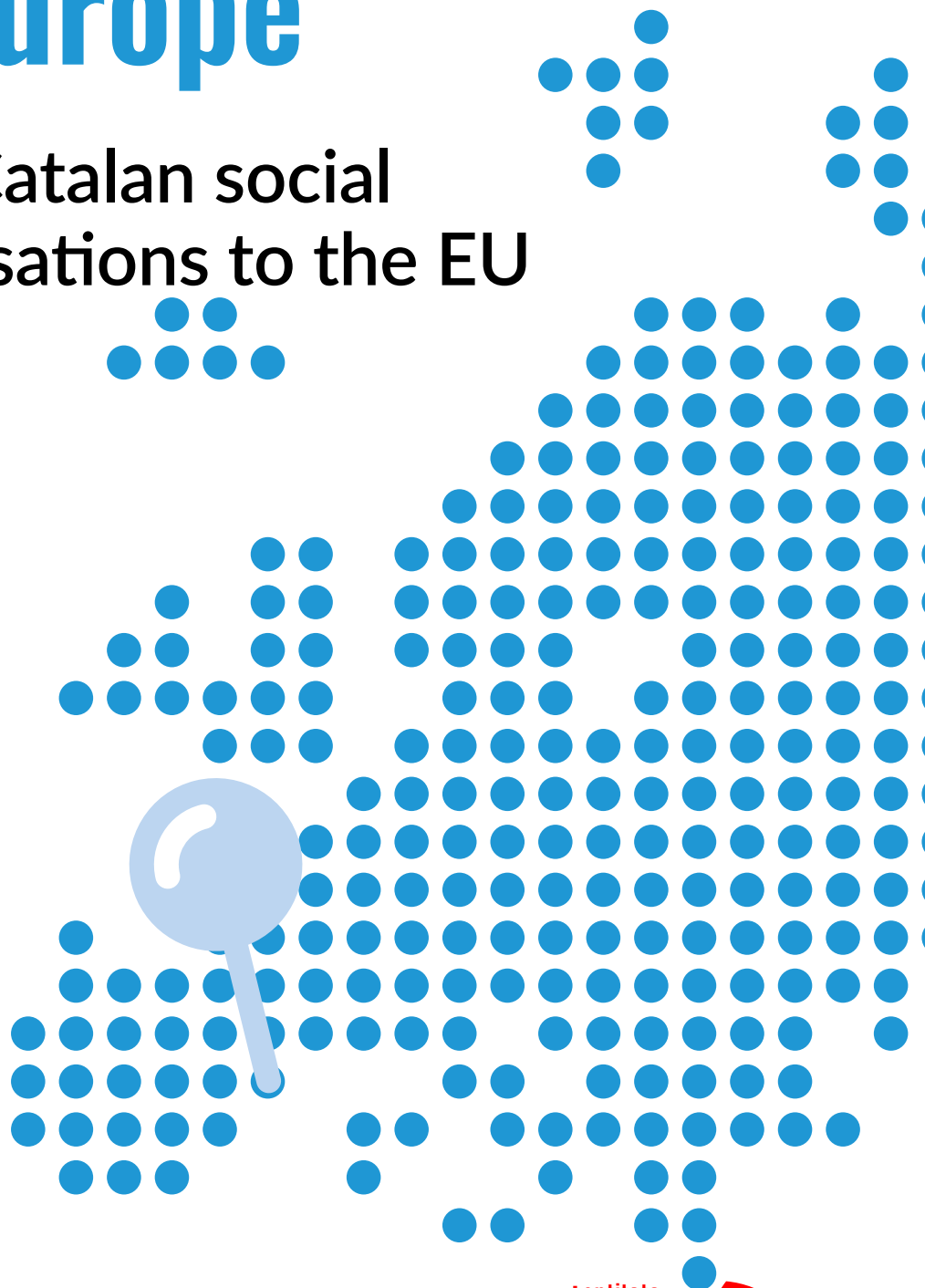


Proposals for a more social Europe

Inputs from Catalan social action organisations to the EU





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1. Introduction

While we know that most of the instruments affecting social rights are handled by Member States, European Union institutions can nevertheless help to lay down guidelines and recommendations on these policies, especially ones tackling poverty and social exclusion linked to employment.

Within this framework, the European Commission has invited state, regional, local and European institutions and European citizens to provide their input during the process of drawing up the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is to be presented in 2021.

In response to this European initiative, this document compiles the inputs from ECAS, a Federation of Catalan Social Action Organisations dealing primarily with groups in a situation or at risk of social exclusion, by leveraging the direct channel of communication for citizens who wish to help towards the shared construction of a more social Europe.

The proposals put forward are in part the outcome of the ideas which emerged during the online workshop **Poverty and Employment. What do Catalan social action organisations want to say to Europe?** which was held on 8 July 2020.

The event was hosted in conjunction by ECAS and the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (Diplocat), a public-private consortium that aims to connect Catalonia with the world and promote the country's image abroad, creating links and relationships of trust with the people and institutions of other countries. Diplocat also encourages civil society and Catalan organisations to become involved in and contribute to the main global challenges and debates. It fosters their ability to be major players on the international stage in order to build long-lasting bridges of dialogue over time with the aim of listening and being heard.

The content of this workshop is reproduced as annex 2 to this document and can be viewed [here](#).

As the European Pillar says, social dialogue plays a central role in reinforcing social rights and enhancing sustainable and inclusive growth. Social partners at all levels play a crucial role in pursuing and implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The event was designed as an opportunity for European policymakers and Catalan social leaders to share ideas about a common core issue: social transformation towards improving people's quality of life against the backdrop of a pandemic crisis which has further heightened the need to implement new emergency measures in the areas that concern us.

2. Proposals for the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights is anchored in twenty principles arranged in three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion.

Based on this classification, below are the proposals that the Catalan Social Action Organisations (ECAS) address to the European Commission within the framework of the consultation process for drawing up and implementing the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights.



Image by Capri23auto from Pixabay

Chapter I: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market.

Principle 1: Education, training and lifelong learning.



Proposals:

Many jobs will change, others are already changing in the wake of the pandemic, many tasks will have to be performed by telecommuting, and a significant generation of people will have to retrain if they are to adapt to this new environment. Some of the training proposals which should be emphasised and promoted are:

- Training in **ICT skills (digitalisation)** to combat the digital divide;
- **Language skills** for a more global world: many face-to-face actions will now have to be conducted online and it will be much easier to connect from anywhere, so our language proficiency will have to be enhanced;
- **Online training:** turning contents and methods which until now were classroom-based into e-learning is critical in order to continue training our participants with the same quality and effectiveness;
- **Vocational training:** training plans that are closely tailored to the profiles of unemployed people.

Principle 2: Gender equality.



Proposals:

Women are still one of the groups which have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis, since most of the profiles with the greatest needs at present concern women: the digital divide, more temporary and part-time contracts, higher numbers on furlough, the rise in domestic violence during lockdown, etc. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

- Measures implementing positive discrimination for women in the labour market: **recognition of skills versus CVs by requirement or duties.**

Principle 3: Equal opportunities.



Proposals:

This crisis has exponentially increased inequalities between countries and between groups in each one. It is not only an economic crisis due to slump in business activity but also losses at the personal level in terms of self-esteem, security, confidence, etc. Hence, the following measures are proposed for the most vulnerable groups:

- **Outplace people coming from the underground economy**, with prior training to enable them to compete with the rest of the people who are looking for a job in the regular labour market;
- **Empowerment actions - specification of work goal and life project:** get back cross-cutting and personal skills, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, strength, etc. In general,

the person's recovery through psychological support as an add-on to social and labour integration pathways;

- **Processing permits to regularise the situation of immigrants - programmes for first job and vocational training:** during the pandemic period, people seeking legalisation were greatly hampered by the disruption of appointments in offices handling legalisation cases and registration of residency in large towns and cities such as Barcelona; all these procedures had to be done online and many people in this group could not access them.

Principle 4: Active support to employment.



Proposals:

Member States and regions need to step up support for employment, with genuinely proactive policies tailored to the current needs of workers and enterprises:

- **New job opportunities in the same industry:** grants for innovation in the industries which have been hardest hit yet have the potential to reinvent themselves;
- **Redirecting towards new industries which can create jobs,** with appropriate training (skills recycling for professionals): the fact that telecommuting is becoming more widespread may open up new employment and economic opportunities since other needs will emerge (fitting out homes for telecommuting, greater local spending as there will be less travel, etc.);
- **Comprehensive empowerment projects** identifying skills and designing and implementing the life project (coordinated with the proposal made in measure 3);
- **Fast-track careers guidance services** both online and blended: many of the people who are currently on furlough or unemployed are in this position because of the COVID-19 crisis and not because they do not have the skills or resources needed to rejoin to the labour market. For these people, a fast-track guidance service which shows them alternative options with small, very specific training capsules, will be sufficient for them to find work;
- **Youth employment programmes:** incentives for hiring, one-off programmes, vocational training and new opportunity schools, as young people are still one of the groups worst affected by unemployment;
- **Driving direct recruitment:** many businesses and organisations will need financial support for job creation until the labour market and economic growth start to get back to normal;
- Public and universal support resources bank.



Chapter III: Social protection and inclusion.

Principle 11: Childcare and support to children.



Proposals:

In the children and young people group, young people who are or have been in care are particularly vulnerable.

- **Support for the unstable situation of young people who have been in care:**

at the moment we have a major problem with unaccompanied minors who have arrived in Catalonia in recent months, who have been under the guardianship of the government and therefore have gained a residence permit, but who cannot renew it because current immigration law does not allow renewal unless a number of economic conditions are fulfilled which these young people cannot meet. Soon there will be a high percentage of undocumented young people from third countries living in flats paid for with public funds and without any prospect of a feasible life project.

Principle 14: Minimum income.



Proposals:

Universal Basic Income is not yet being considered at the European level, yet in the social realm, it is seen as one of the key in considerably reducing the level of poverty in Europe.

- **Basic citizenship income** as a starting point for addressing processes for enhancing skills and labour market integration: a review of the funds allocated to this measure since at present and at least in Spain, both the national and Catalan minimum living allowances are below the minimum level of income and therefore do not allow people who receive them to lift themselves out of poverty.

Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities.



Proposals:

Another of the groups hardest hit by the post-pandemic crisis are people with disabilities, as in many cases the current situation does not allow them to perform activities and jobs they were previously able to do. For some specific disabilities (such as visual impairment, for instance), COVID-19 prevention measures leave them unable to use their sense of touch which is essential for them.

- Support for **tailoring resources** and communication and information channels to the various needs of people with disabilities, greater accessibility, training in the use of the new channels, etc.

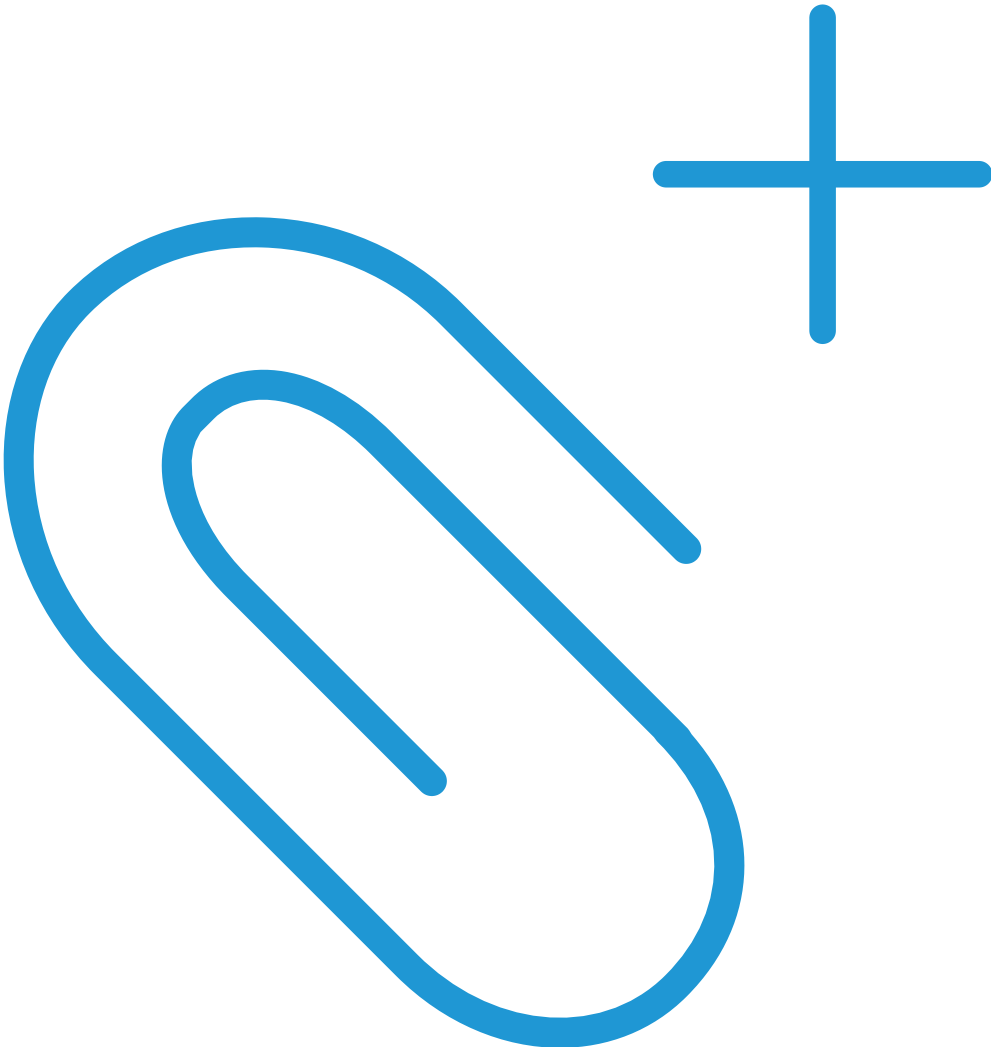
Principle 20: Access to essential services.



Proposals:

The minimum income designed to ensure that no one is excluded from essential services has to be fully effective. Consequently, **these essential services need to be guaranteed in each Member State**. Social organisations are committed to continuing to provide support from their mechanisms, but they also require effective resources and channels to assist the people they work with.





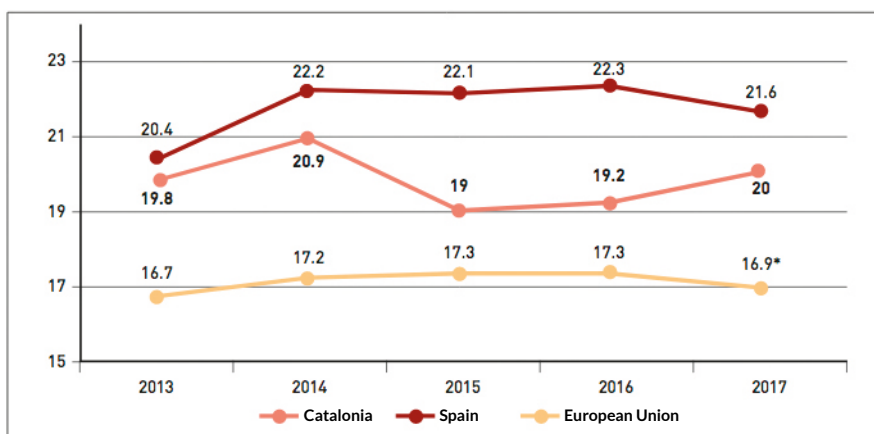
Annexes

Annex 1. Socio-economic context in Catalonia

Analysis of the latest official data (situation prior to COVID-19)

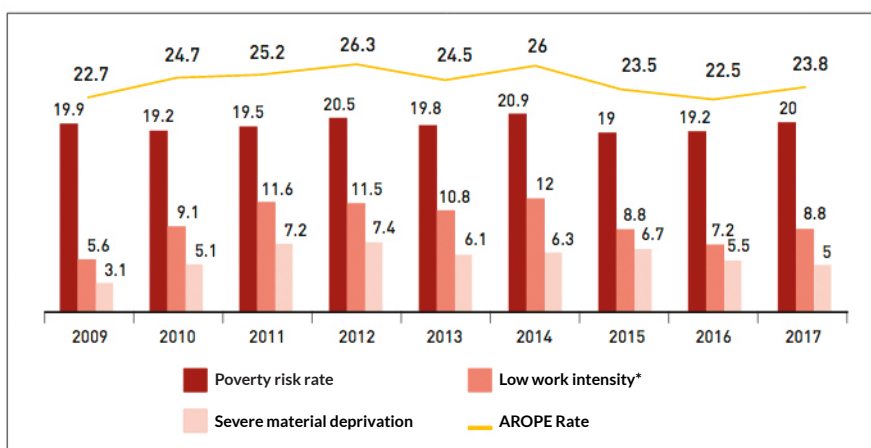
► Poverty (20%), the risk of poverty or exclusion (AROPE rate, 23.8%) and inequalities (Gini coefficient and S80 / 20) are increasing in Catalonia. Poverty is becoming chronic and macroeconomic recovery is not leading to an improvement in the population's living conditions. Precariousness perpetuates in the employment and housing areas.

Graph 1. At-risk-of-poverty rate in Catalonia, Spain and EU, 2013-2017 (%)



* Estimated value
Source: In-house document by Idescat (INE's Living Conditions Survey)

Graph 2. AROPE rate and its components in Catalonia, 2009-2017 (%)



Source: In-house document by Idescat (INE's Living Conditions Survey)
* Calculated on the population aged 18-59 years and applied to the population aged 0-59 years

Source: INSOCAT no. 10, *Treball precari, habitatge privatiu i manca d'inversió social – Precarious work, privative housing and lack of social investment* (ECAS, 2019).

➡ Unemployment has been falling for five years (11.5% in 2018 vs. 23.1% in 2013) but is still much higher than the pre-crisis levels of 2008 (6.5% in 2006), and is particularly worrying among young people, with a rate twice as high as the general rate of 27.7% (16-24 years old). The employment rate has also improved since 2012 (71.8%, EU average 72.2%, European target 2020 75%). The long-term unemployment rate is also falling (6.3% 2018) but is almost double that of the EU (3.4%).

➡ The most worrying aspect in terms of employment and labour market is the increase in precariousness and poverty at work: 12.2% of poor workers (9.6% EU), 14.3% of part-time hiring (large gender gap: 22.2% women vs. 7.3%; lack of alternatives to work-life balance and overloading of women with domestic and care tasks), temporary employment (21.6%, with only 12.9% of new signed contracts being indefinite) and low wages (17.8% of women and 7.8% of men with annual earnings below the minimum income when it was €655/month). There is a notable difference between the population with indefinite contracts and temporary contracts, which particularly affects young people and migrants. The average gross annual salary among people under 25 is 10,809 euros. There is a difference of more than 15,000 euros between the two extremes. The difference between Spanish nationals and foreigners is 8,146 euros, with a bias by origin (discussed in detail in [INSOCAT 11, Migracions i vulnerabilitat -Migrations and vulnerability, \(2020\)](#)).

First approximations and forecasts on the impact of the COVID-19

➡ There is a worrying increase in inequalities (much higher loss of income among the poorest people, more than eight times that of the richest; and a net increase of 1.7 points in the Gini coefficient) and poverty. According to estimates, the total number of poor people in Spain would increase by 700,000 (up to 10.8 million, from 21.5% before COVID-19 to 23.1%), with a drop of 9% in GDP and an increase in unemployment to 19%.

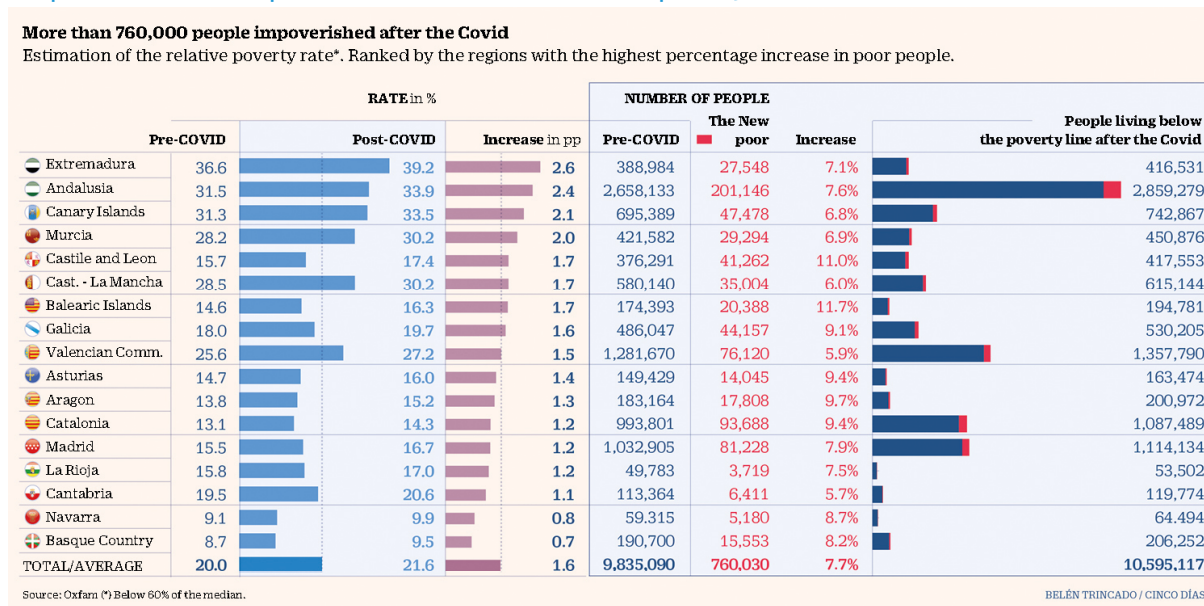
Graph 3. Evolution and foreseeable impact of the COVID-19 on relative poverty (in % of the population)



Source: A fair reconstruction is needed and possible (Oxfam Intermón, 2020).

In Catalonia, relative poverty would increase by 9.4% (93,688 new poor people).

Graph 4. Estimated impact of the COVID-19 on relative poverty.



Source: COVID-19 could push 760,000 people into poverty, which would reach a quarter of the Spanish population (Cinco Días, 2020)

▶ The IMF forecasts that Spain will be the developed country hardest hit by the pandemic. The World Bank predicts the worst recession since the Second World War, with -12.8% of GDP without specific data for Spain. The OECD predicts a fall in GDP of up to 14.4% in Spain and an unemployment rise of up to 20% (10/06 El Periódico).

▶ In Catalonia, according to the Survey of the Working Population (EPA) 1st Quarter 2020, unemployment has risen by 5,800 people (a total of 411,600 unemployed, which represents a rate of 10.7%, an increase of +0.2% over the previous quarter). The great impact of people on furlough (almost 548,000 up to 31/03/2020) is still not reflected because they are considered as employed as long as the suspension of activity is less than three months (28/04/2020 Ara).

▶ Unemployment rose to 417,000 people on March, (+5.52% compared to February; 02/04/2020, Ara and 03/04/2020, El Punt Avui).

▶ According to the most recent data by UGT (General Workers' Union) unemployment in Catalonia rose to 483,149 people (15,339 more than in April (a 3.28% inter-monthly increase) and 112,058 more than a year ago, + 30.2%) and 126,233 destroyed jobs since the beginning of the first state of alarm. The Temporary Layoffs total 97,757 companies and 721,557 workers affected in Catalonia (accumulated data as of 1 June).

▶ Unemployment percentage of people under 25 years of age is 32.2%, according to Eurostat data.

Annex 2. Objectives and summary of the workshop Poverty and Employment.

What do the Catalan social action organisations want to say to Europe?

The workshop's specific OBJECTIVES were:

- ✓ To convey the reality and priorities of the Catalan social action organisations to key European stakeholders in two major priority areas of action: employment and poverty.
- ✓ To provide inputs from Catalonia to the process of drawing up the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- ✓ To learn the policies and instruments in the social protection and inclusion area foreseen in the new 2021-2027 programme.
- ✓ To learn first-hand about the European initiatives and actions planned to answer to the social crisis that has arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The following questions were asked to the speakers:




What channels of communication and interlocution with the European Union can Catalan social action organisations use, given that they have a very direct knowledge of citizens' needs, especially in the areas of the workshop: poverty and employment?


What policies and instruments do you plan to develop in the new European Funds 2021-2027 programme, in the social protection and inclusion areas, particularly with regard to job insecurity and youth unemployment?


What initiatives and actions are planned at a European level to tackle the social crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which in the case of Catalonia has increased the poverty rate among citizens by almost 9.5%?

SUMMARY of interventions

 **Alfonso González Bondía, Director General for European and Mediterranean Affairs of the Catalan Government**, welcomed the workshop on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Institutional Relations and Transparency, Bernat Solé, and thanked the speakers and organisers. He presented the workshop's general objective: social transformation towards improving people's quality of life and the interest of Catalan organisations in making their concerns and proposals directly known to the competent European authorities. He referred to the Europe Plan (November 2019), arguing that **citizens must be at the centre of policies and decisions that lead to**

strengthen the EU's social dimension. He also mentioned the new **2021-2027 framework**, which should offer solutions and enough resources to tackle the pandemic crisis. He presented his department's European Funds Unit, which informs about European opportunities that may be of interest to public and private agents in Catalonia, along with an advisory service, newsletters, European job offers, etc.

 **Xavier Puig, President of the Catalan Social Action Organisations (ECAS)** thanked Diplocat for co-organising the event together with ECAS. A differentiating and defining element of ECAS is precisely to develop and implement ideas, in alliance with other entities and agents. He also thanked the work of the international committee of ECAS and collaborators of the workshop. He defined what ECAS is: working with people and with communities; closeness with the situations that people live, to transform from this reality, but legislated and executed from the official organisations. That is the reason of proposing a session like this workshop. He stressed that ECAS is a member of ESAN (European Social Action Network) and ESN (European Social Network), therefore, it is very much present in Europe. He ended by calling for the need for a **Universal Basic Income and a fairer taxation.**

 **Laura Foraster, Secretary General of the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (Diplocat)** highlighted that the composition of Diplocat's consortium is diverse and transversal, and that it **accompanies civil society and the member entities of the consortium who wish to have a presence on the international scene**, whether to contribute to the main challenges and global debates, to find spaces for collaboration between them, or to share the reality of our country abroad. This is the case of this workshop's initiative, where Diplocat and ECAS coincide in the opportunity to carry out this debate, at a time when the European Commission is working on the elaboration and implementation Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights, planned for 2021.

After that, **Marta Cid, ECAS international member**, and moderator of the workshop, turned the floor over to the participants:

 **Ana Carrero, Team Leader for Spain and Malta of the European Social Fund in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission.**

Her contribution focused on explaining what her department, which manages European funds in Spain and Malta, is in charge of. She referred to the **European Pillar of Social Rights** as a basic tool, since it promotes measures for employment and social issues. She commented that there is an ongoing public consultation since January, to request ideas and commitments to implement this pillar on the ground. Therefore, all proposals made can influence the political agenda of the coming years. The European Commission already has a preliminary proposal for a plan, which we can also influence. It is a recommended plan. Some initiatives in the plan already in place are: minimum income, gender equality measures, the renewed child guarantee, etc. Recommendations have already been made to the member states in the first European half-term period.

She also compared the financing instruments that are in place until 2020 with those that will rule the 2021-2027 period. Current until 2020:

- ESF: investment in people, employment, education and social inclusion
- FEAD: food
- FEDER: Investment in infrastructure
- FAMI: Short term immigrants
- YEI: Youth Employment, < 30 NEETs

- EaSI: Smaller-scale projects for innovation and experimentation

Programmes that will rule the 2021-2027 period. Some of the financial lines are being reorganised:

- ESF Plus: Includes ESF-25%, FEAD-2%, YEI-15%, EaSI. Adding Children's Guarantee 5% (new).
- INVEST EU: Guarantees for social and skills investments
- FAMI: Direct management
- FEDER: It will also invest in a more social Europe.

And new features appear post-COVID-19:

- REACT EU: Maintenance and creation of jobs, education and training, access to social services (55 billion euros more to be allocated)
- RRF: Recovery and resilience mechanisms (56 billion euros). These are investments in reforms linked to the European semester, but with a prior plan that each member state has to prepare and send.
- COVID-19 Crisis Response Investment Initiative: 100% liquidity co-financing and flexibility.

She insisted that **it is up to us** to influence the final decisions, by **participating in public consultations, influencing national plans, and participating in calls related to our areas of action.**

 **Isabel Caño, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee.**

She began by describing what the European Economic and Social Committee is. This institution has 350 members: European employers, trade unions, the world of disability, liberal professionals and social economy, etc. Its objective is to promote decent employment with rights, which is fundamental and essential for inclusion. She also referred to sectors that have been hardest hit during the pandemic such as culture, tourism, transport, etc. Workers who were already in precarious situations have been most affected (**invisible workers**) and are now even more vulnerable. The **digital divide** has increased the complexity of this situation, also highlighting the **feminisation** of this divide, making it more urgent to defend a space in decision-making for women.

She commented on the existence of a new SURE fund to safeguard jobs, along with other measures that have been activated in each member country. She also referred to the controversy between the distribution of funds at European level. She stressed that **there has to be a transition of economic and social model**, in order not to leave anyone behind (member states, regions, vulnerable people). This transition must include three very important pillars:

- Recovery plan and European funds.
- Social investment plan (e.g. health workers and their demands for the non-improvement of this type of resource).
- Social rights plan.

She also insisted that **the more people become involved in the public consultation, the higher the impact.**

Finally, she commented that the minimum income has to exist at European level. Solidarity is key. It must be an obligation for states and for the EU and it has to determine the social future of Europe in order to get out of this situation.

 **Ferran Busquets, Member of ECAS and Director of Arrels Fundació**

He described the current situation of poverty in Catalonia. An important source of information is the INSOCAT which analyses Catalonia's social indicators yearly. **The figures for 2014-2018 show that 21.30% of the population of Catalonia was living in poverty.** There is a significant difference between men (18.40%) and women (24.10%). The rate among the elderly is also very high (19.20%). The AROPE rate (24.70%) has three factors that generate a high level of suffering in many people: poverty, low work intensity and severe material deprivation. The percentage rises sharply among non-EU foreign nationals (54%). **After these months of the pandemic, the poverty rate in Catalonia has reached 26%.**

With reference to the idea of a minimum income, he commented that in Catalonia we already have a **guaranteed citizen income**, and as a result of the pandemic, the **minimum life income** at a state level. However, these benefits are not cumulative, only complementary. Both are well below the current poverty line. **These benefits keeps its recipients in poverty and does not help them out of it.** The administration does not guarantee a solution to the poverty situation, and therefore greater levels of inequality are generated, with the consequent stigmatisation of those who suffer from it.

 **Sonia Moragrega, Member of the ECAS Board of Directors and Director General of**

Fundació Intermedia

She **explained** that her intervention provides data and reflections made in the ECAS social and work placement committee. She showed some data on employment, before and after the COVID-19:

Before:

- There is 11.5% unemployment at the beginning of 2018 (in 2013 it was 23.10%), which is double in young people (27.7%), the long-term unemployment rate decreases (6.3%) but doubles that of the EU.
- There are 12.20% of poor workers (9.60% in the EU).
- The percentage of part-time hiring is 14.30 (22.20% for women and 7.30% for men).
- There are 21.6% of temporary contracts, and only 12.90% are indefinite.
- Low wages with annual earnings below the minimum income (17.80% for women and 7.80% for men).

After (April 2020):

- At state level, social security affiliation falls, unemployment rises to 21.10% (not including Temporary Layoffs), and hiring falls. In Catalonia: during March, unemployment rose by 5.50% not including Temporary Layoffs. Compared with April last year, there is 30.20% more unemployment.
- 126,233 destroyed jobs.
- Unemployment among young people under 25 rises to 32.20%.

The Government of Catalonia offers different programmes for boosting hiring to companies and organisations, some of which are very innovative. Support is given to self-employed people, to maintaining jobs, to cooperatives, to economic reactivation programmes, etc.

The profiles of people who are coming to the social organisations are changing and their needs are increasing:

- Self-employed people who had to close their businesses.
- Working people from SMEs in Temporary Layoffs and/or dismissed.
- Temporary workers who move from Temporary Layoffs to Employment Regulation Files are directly dismissed.
- Working people in the underground economy.
- Working people in the hotel and tourism sector.
- People who are victims of the temporary nature of the job market, who were without work before lockdown. (permanent seasonal workers).
- Women caring for children with the husband in a Temporary Layoff-Employment Regulation File situation.
- Staff from the special regime of the Home Care Aid, who have met with the death of the people they were taking care of.
- Working people in sport-related activities.
- Working people in the field of leisure time or event organisation.
- Working people linked to import/export.
- Working people from 'false self-employment' platforms.
- Working people in art, cinema, theatres, museums, etc.
- People receiving the minimum life income
- Long-term unemployed people, young people, undocumented migrants.

Debate

After the interventions, different social action organisations posed five questions to the European representatives:



Question 1: Josep Serrano. Member of the Board of Directors of The Confederation and President of the Commission on the Elderly.

He reflected on the need to increase the value of the support and care of people given by the social sector. That is, to acknowledge the social sector as a strategic and essential sector, a pillar of the welfare state.

How can the Commission help to raise public awareness of the work of the social sector (a highly feminised, low-wage sector with very little social and economic appreciation) and how can it ensure that European funds in general and those being mobilised to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 reach the social sector?

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): The social sector has become essential work (it was previously invisible). It is necessary to detect which organisations serve as an interface between the administration and the target groups. The social economy sector is represented in the Committee and there is an initiative within the Committee concerning these essential workers.

European Commission (EC): We must be alert to initiatives that may have an impact on the sector of care and attention to people and take part in discussions. There are funds linked to the needs of the European semester, but they have to be proposed from the Member State (regional and national). In Catalonia, this is the SOC. A direct dialogue must be sought with the SOC. There will also be spaces for dialogue at national level. At European level, the idea of closer collaboration

with social services (public and third sector) is being launched. With regard to the universal basic income, there is working in progress on a European minimum income and we can influence this with our proposals.



Question 2: Teresa Crespo. Member of the ECAS Board of Directors and of the Poverty Committee)

The social organisations would like to know to what extent belonging to the EU should ensure recognition of social and employment rights as European citizens, and provide a guarantee of optimal living conditions? They would also like to know the EU's capacity and political desire to undertake this new social and economic orientation: Can we envisage a labour market that guarantees decent employment and income conditions?

EC: We have been moving forward in the recent years: social protection, European minimum income, etc. The social dimension is very strong and very much taken into account.

EESC: Great efforts are being made at European level, but Member States must also back the measures proposed. Europe must be social, not have social measures. Much remains to be done.





Question 3: Rosa Balaguer. Vice-President and member of the ECAS Public Impact Committee)

How does the European Commission assess the proposal for a European Universal Basic Income, adapted to each Member State? How can we promote it?

EC: As Universal Basic Income there is no concrete proposal, but it can be suggested within this public consultation.



Question 4: Esteve Ferrer. Secretary of ENSIE, European Network of Social Integration Enterprises.)

Article 20 of Directive 2014/24/EU establishes reserving public procurement to “economic operators whose main objective is the social and occupational integration of disabled or disadvantaged persons”. Do you consider this resource to be particularly strategic in the fight against social exclusion? What do you think about the implementation of this directive in the Member States, particularly in the Kingdom of Spain?

EESC: Yes, Article 20 provides for reserve support for contracts to social enterprises, but this very same article contradicts this, because each Member State can decide whether or not to apply it. In 2016, infringements were opened in several countries, including Spain, but it is not known what the real effect was. This issue, which also affects women to a greater extent, is also raised at the Disability Forum.

EC: The issue of social enterprises in public procurement is a pity. The organisations could train public managers. A social economic plan is planned which could be influenced.



Question 5: Jesús Delgado Almendros. Member of the Board and Head of International Relations of the Bureau of the Third Sector.

Migratory flows in Catalonia and the rest of Europe have been shaping new social realities and new scenarios in the labour world. What commitments and consensus do you think all EU countries should acquire to respond in a coordinated way to today’s and tomorrow’s migratory phenomenon, in the midst of the European debate on how to tackle this growing phenomenon, and in an unexpected context of health, economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic?

EESC: There is a lack of political will on the part of the Member States with regard to immigrants. With the climate crisis, there will be new migratory flows. European, not national, policies are needed.

European Commission: There are various unsuccessful proposals. We must take advantage of the initiatives for access to employment to approach these groups with more specific needs.

During the debate with the public moderated by **Ana Ollo, member of the ECAS International and Social Innovation Committee**, several issues were raised, of which the following were highlighted:



How could the social role of the European Union be highlighted at a time of mistrust of European institutions?

European Commission: A key element, when implementing the services and projects with the entities, is to share in an educational way what part of those actions is possible because Europe exists, to explain that there are European notes behind the daily work and the policies that guide us. It is difficult to make this transfer.

EESC: The Committee is an advisory institution, all the bodies representing Europe's socio-economic fabric are represented, part of its commitment is to explain and identify problems, aspects that can be changed, improved, etc. The European elections in May 2019 saw the highest participation so far, and this interest in the European idea must be maintained. What are the European institutions doing on a day-to-day basis? Sometimes the right answers are not given to the questions raised.



The COVID-19 crisis has brought the problem of seasonal workers to the fore in Lleida. Why is this issue not addressed in good times?

EESC: The current pandemic has given greater visibility to the major problems relating to the labour, living and transport conditions of thousands of seasonal workers in Catalonia, whether they come from Africa or the EU's eastern countries. These workers, hired to harvest fruit and vegetables, are particularly vulnerable and are now the new victims of COVID-19.

Responsibility for the proper application of European Union rules in relation to seasonal workers lies with national authorities, and the European Commission can only monitor the proper application of EU rules. The EESC's role, which is the voice of organised civil society at EU level, is primarily to give its voice through opinions when EU legislation is initiated. The EESC also supports the activities of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and the European Labour Authority (ELA).



The current health crisis is making life very difficult for people with visual impairment, in particular the preventive measures taken, as these people are largely dependent on touch. What specific measures is the EU taking to assist people with visual impairment?

EESC: The EU's approach covers all people with disabilities, without specifically targeting those with a visual disability. With regard to the health crisis caused by COVID-19, the EU has recently launched two instruments in the health sector. The first is the new *EU Health Programme*, which will cover the period 2021-2027. This programme has three main general objectives:

1. to protect the EU population from serious cross-border health threats;
2. to ensure the availability and affordability of medicines, health products and other products relevant to the crisis and support innovation;
3. to strengthen health systems and health workforce.

The second instrument is a series of short-term measures to strengthen the Union's health readiness for COVID-19 outbreaks. These are actions needed to improve preparation, such as diagnostic testing and contact tracing, improved public health surveillance and extended access to medical countermeasures such as personal protective equipment, medicines or medical devices. These actions also include measures to support minorities and vulnerable people. The Communication specifically mentions the importance for disabled people to receive adequate personal protective equipment.

Annex 3. Programme



POVERTY AND EMPLOYMENT What do Catalan social action organisations want to say to Europe?

Wednesday, 8 July 2020 at 10 am

ONLINE SESSION
Confirmations using
the form

Following the most recent European elections in June 2019 and with the new European Commission in place, the social action organisations are keen to bring their priorities and concerns to the attention of EU players who are working on social issues to influence them and show what the situation is like in Catalonia.

While most social rights instruments are handled by member states, European Union institutions can help to lay down guidelines and recommendations on these policies, especially in terms of employment-related poverty and social exclusion.

As part of drawing up and implementing its European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the European Commission is welcoming input from state, regional, local and European institutions and civil society organisations in order to prepare this Action Plan which is to be presented in 2021. The European Pillar of Social Rights was proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Gothenburg Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in 2017.

#SocialUE

PROGRAMME

- 10.00 am **Welcome**
- **Alfonso González Bondía**, General Director of European and Mediterranean Affairs of the Catalan Government
 - **Xavier Puig**, Chair of the Catalan Social Action Organisations (ECAS) federation
 - **Laura Foraster**, Secretary General of the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (Diplocat)
- 10.10 am **Panel discussion**
- Moderator: **Marta Cid**, ECAS international member
- **Ana Carrero**, European Social Fund Spain and Malta team leader in the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission
 - **Isabel Caño**, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee
 - **Ferran Busquets**, ECAS member for poverty and Director of the Arrels Foundation
 - **Sonia Moragrega**, ECAS Board member and General Director at the Intermedia Foundation
- 11.00 am **Q&A session for the social action sector**
- 11.20 am **Q&A session for the general public**
- Moderator: **Ana Oilo**, member of the ECAS international and social innovation committee
- 11.35 am **Closing address**
- **Laura Foraster**, Secretary General of the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (Diplocat)

Annex 4. Participants



> FERRAN BUSQUETS
DIRECTOR OF FUNDACIÓ ARRELS

Director of Fundació Arrels and Member of the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees of Fundació Mambré, he is also a Member of the Ethics Committee of the Social Services of Catalonia. He was previously Head of Internal Management at Arrels with responsibilities in administration, finance, human resources and information systems. He has been a volunteer in the organisation's street team and open centre. He has a degree in Computer Science and a postgraduate degree in Social Mediation and has worked professionally for more than ten years in private companies in the database field. At the same time, and without interruption, he has been a volunteer in the prisons and southern countries fields, offering technological support to organisations. Fundació Arrels has been a member of ECAS since 2004 and is part of the Board of Directors since 2009.



> ISABEL CAÑO
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Member of the UGT (General Workers' Union). Head of the Office of the UGT in Brussels and a collaborator of the UGT's Confederal Secretariat for International Policy since 1993. Monitoring of European and trade union policy. Bilateral relations with other trade union and social organisations. Alternate member of the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee) (1997-2010). Full member of the EESC since 21 September 2010 in the TEN and NAT sections. Active in issues such as Rural Development, Environment, Sustainable Development, Education, Training, Energy, Public Health and Information Society. Permanent study group on the European Energy Community 2015-2018. Member of the Permanent Digital Agenda Group since its creation. Member of EESC delegations to the Climate Conferences 2013-2018 (Warsaw, Lima, Paris, Marrakesh and Bonn COPs). Member of the EESC delegations to the United Nations HLPF (High Level Policy Forum) on Sustainable Development. United Nations, 2016 and 2017. Member of the TEN Section Bureau 2010-2018. Vice-President of the Sustainable Development Observatory 2013-2018. EESC Vice-President responsible for Communication since 2018.



> ANA CARRERO
HEAD OF THE SPANISH TEAM IN THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

She has a Degree in Law and Business Administration from Universidad Carlos III of Madrid in 2004. She has been a member of the Senior Government Auditors of Spain since 2007 and has also been a European civil servant since 2011. She is currently the European Social Fund Spain and Malta team leader in the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission, in the unit responsible for promoting modernisation of the labour market and social protection systems, principles of economic and social cohesion, institutional capacity and administrative reforms in Spain, in accordance with the reform agenda of the European Semester, as well as ensuring effective programming and implementation of the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Fund to help the most disadvantaged.

With a professional career forged in public institutions such as the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors and the Spanish Ministry of Finance, Ana Carrero has extensive experience in the field of economics and finance in the public sector, EU structural funds, in particular the ESF, and employment and social inclusion policies. To this she adds a deep knowledge of the policies, regulations and procedures that support these systems, both at national and European level, and a firm commitment to provide all the guarantees of quality, legality and regularity in their execution.



> LAURA FORASTER
SECRETARY GENERAL OF DIPLOCAT

She holds a degree in Economics and Business Administration at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), a degree in Humanities at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and an MA in European Studies at the KU Leuven. She also has specific education in Public Diplomacy and in Election Observation Missions. From 2012 to 2018, she was the Executive Director of Diplocat and, previously, she was the Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs (2003-2006) and of the Minister of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise (2006-2010) of the Government of Catalonia. Prior to this, she worked in Brussels, carrying out various tasks in the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the Delegation of the Government of Catalonia to the European Union and the European Parliament. She is Secretary General of Diplocat since 17 December 2018.



> SONIA MORAGREGA
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FUNDACIÓ INTERMEDIA

She has a Degree in Therapeutic Pedagogy from the Universitat de Barcelona. She has a Postgraduate degree in Labour Integration from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and in Citizenship and Immigration from the Universitat de Girona. She has specific training in competence models, gender perspective and leadership of organisations and teams. She has over 20 years of professional experience in employment and accompaniment of people at risk of exclusion both for the public administration and in the private sector. From 2003 to 2015 she worked at the Fundació SURT where her last position was Technical Director. In 2012, with the creation of Fundació Intermedia by SURT, Ires and Suara Cooperativa, she became part of this Foundation, as the Operations Director and Director General for the last 2 years. Fundació Intermedia is a member of the Board of Directors of ECAS and is part of the ECAS Work Placement Committee since its creation.



> XAVIER PUIG
PRESIDENT OF ECAS

Social Educator, University Diploma in Teaching and Diploma in Non-Governmental Organisation Management from ESADE. Director of the CEPS Association. Linked to different social platforms with different responsibilities, he is member of the Board of Directors of FEDAIA, the Catalan employers' association AEISC and the Spanish association AEEISSS, EAPN-Spain and European social economy networks.

He was President of the Catalan Third Social Sector Business Confederation from its creation until the last management team reshuffle. He is currently a member of the Governing Board of the Association of Social Educators of Catalonia and President of its General Council. CEPS has been a member of ECAS and of the Board of Directors since its creation, holding its vice-presidency in different mandates.



> BERNAT SOLÉ
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN ACTION, INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CATALONIA

He holds a bachelor degree in Industrial Engineering from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya BarcelonaTech (UPC) and he is a high school teacher.

During his professional career, he has worked in the private sector and on his own as an engineer, and as a high school teacher. Currently, he is a member of the Parliament of Catalonia for the political party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left) from which he has been deputy spokesperson, and he was the Mayor of the town of Agramunt (Urgell) until he was appointed as Catalan Minister for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency.

He began his political career as communication secretary in the local board of ERC Urgell in 2005, and he was elected MP for the region of Lleida when he ran for the elections on the cross-party and civil society list “Junts pel Sí” (Together for Yes) in 2015. From then on, he has been president on the Parliament commission of Labour, member of the commissions of Agriculture and Institutional Affairs, and spokesperson for the commission of Education for ERC’s parliamentary group. On local politics, Solé has been a member of the Town council of Agramunt since 2007. In 2011, he was elected Mayor, and he was re-elected twice, in 2015 and 2019. He has also been a member of the Catalan Commission of Urbanism.

Bernat Solé has been involved in civil associations since the 80s, as a member of Agramunt’s Scouts (1984-2004) and as a Scouts leader (1999-2001). He also played basketball (1989-2004), was a member and founder of Agramunt’s Cobla Jovenívola (1987-2007), and music director of the Caramellaire Aires del Sió group and the Teatredetics Company (2000-2008).

The member entities of DIPLOCAT

>> Public institutions and municipal entities

- Government of Catalonia
- Barcelona City Council
- Tarragona City Council
- Girona City Council
- Lleida City Council
- Vielha e Mijaran Town Council
- Barcelona Provincial Council
- Tarragona Provincial Council
- Girona Provincial Council
- Lleida Provincial Council
- Conselh Generau d'Aran
- Catalan Association of Municipalities and Counties
- Federation of Municipalities of Catalonia

>> Entities of the business sector

- General Council of the Official Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Catalonia
- Entrepreneurs association Foment del Treball Nacional
- Association of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Catalonia (PIMEC)
- Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia
- Multi-Sector Business Association (AMEC)
- Private Foundation of Entrepreneurs (FemCAT)

>> Entities of the social, trade union and sports sector

- The Group of Entities of the Voluntary Sector of Catalonia
- Trade union Unió General de Treballadors (UGT)
- Trade union Comissions Obreres (CCOO)
- Football Club Barcelona

>> Universities, business schools and academic institutions

- University of Barcelona (UB)
- Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)
- Technical University of Catalonia (UPC)
- Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)
- University of Lleida (UdL)
- University of Girona (UdG)
- Rovira i Virgili University (URV)
- Ramon Llull University (URL)
- Open University of Catalonia (UOC)
- University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC)
- International University of Catalonia (UIC)
- Abat Oliba CEU University (UAO CEU)
- Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI)
- EADA Business School
- Barcelona Graduate School of Economics (Barcelona GSE)

