



Global Forum
for Social and Solidarity
Economy

GSEF CHARTER



Global organization of local governments and civil society networks
for Social and Solidarity Economy

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PREAMBLE

Our world today has yet to recover from the economic crisis and the ecological crisis. To overcome such global challenges, we believe that creating a 'better world' and a 'better life' through social and solidarity economy is essential. Social and solidarity economy refers to a form of economy that seeks to solve the present issues through trust and cooperation and by forging communal solidarity.

The 'Seoul Declaration', adopted on the 5th of November, 2013, summarizes the spirit mentioned above. In 2014, we took a step further by adopting the Charter of GSEF for the systematic progress and global solidarity of the social and solidarity economy.

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Our Identity

1.1. For the global solidarity of social and solidarity economy, we establish the Global Forum for Social and Solidarity Economy (hereafter referred to as "GSEF"), as a non-profit international organization.

1.2. Social and solidarity economy achieves the value of solidarity through trust and cooperation and the local community is its most fundamental foundation.

1.3. The main subjects of the social and solidarity economy are cooperatives, community enterprises, social enterprises, credit unions, micro credit, non-profit organizations, et cetera. Charities and social investment fields are included in this category.

1.4. GSEF does not accept discrimination and injustice of any kind on the grounds of nationality, race, religion and gender or sexuality.

1.5. GSEF aims for multi-dimensional progress. We acknowledge the pluralism of human nature, social and solidarity economy organizations, and macroeconomic and political aims. We pursue progress that harmonizes such pluralism.

1.6. In particular, GSEF values the autonomy of grassroots organizations and in accordance with this value, we believe it is essential to complement the policies of both local and central governments.

Article 2. Our vision, mission and objectives

2.1. Vision: GSEF aims for the harmonious progress of market economy, public economy, social and solidarity economy, and ecology in general. Such progress will make the best use of an individual's ability and solve social problems through solidarity among social and solidarity economy subjects. Therefore, GSEF serves as a global solidarity network to achieve these goals.

2.2. Mission: Through the collaboration between social and solidarity economy organizations and local governments, GSEF pursues the creation of quality jobs, fair growth, progress of grassroots democracy, and sustainable development. Values such as human dignity and sustainable ecology are to be the underlying principles for every activity of GSEF. GSEF contributes to enhancing the quality and quantity of shared resources and promotes the fair approach and use of such resources. The key to reclaiming the commons is trust and cooperation, which are fundamental to social and solidarity economy. Ecosystem, culture, knowledge, and historical resources of all local communities are all important objectives of GSEF's activities.

2.3. Objectives :

- 1) GSEF promotes both personal and material exchanges and sharing among the main global actors of the social and solidarity economy. To this end, GSEF will establish on/offline platforms and create diverse programs to activate personal and material exchanges.
- 2) GSEF supports local government and non-government agencies to create a stable social and solidarity economy network through the public-private-community partnership.
- 3) GSEF supports every effort to form social and solidarity economy associations and social and solidarity economy supporting bodies in each region. Through these organizations, GSEF promotes various joint projects to widen the scope of social and solidarity economy on a global scale.
- 4) GSEF acknowledges the responsibility to support developing countries which suffer from poverty and serious underdevelopment, thereby promoting global solidarity and cooperation in the field of social and solidarity economy to enhance the environment, economy, society, and culture of those countries.
- 5) GSEF supports various global movements that are compatible with the social values we uphold and furthermore promotes collective actions to solve problems that humanity confronts.
- 6) GSEF may set up a fund to support social and solidarity economy when necessary.

CHAPTER 2. MEMBERSHIP

Article 3. Membership categories

3.1. Membership of GSEF, in principle, is divided into four categories.

- 1) Full Member
- 2) Associate Member
- 3) Honorary Member
- 4) Partner

3.2. Full Member

- 1) Full membership is open to local governments and social and solidarity economy network members. A full member possesses the right to vote and is eligible to run for election.
- 2) Local government membership is open to every local autonomous entity, government, and both local and national associations.
- 3) Social and solidarity economy network membership is open to all regional, national, continental and global networks that are working in various fields of social and solidarity economy including supporting organizations and associations.

3.3. Associate Member: Associate membership is open to every local government and social and solidarity economy-related organization wishing to actively participate in GSEF's activities.

3.4. Honorary Member: Honorary membership is given to an individual or an organization that has made notable contributions to diverse social and solidarity economy sectors and the GSEF's activities. An honorary member shall be nominated by the GSEF Steering Committee and be acknowledged by the General Assembly.

3.5. Partner: A partner is either an intergovernmental organization, a national governmental office, or a civil/private organization/enterprise working with GSEF in a broader sector including social and solidarity economy and appointed by the GSEF Steering Committee.

Article 4. Registration and withdrawal of membership

4.1. Registration: Member registration is reviewed by the GSEF Secretariat and approved by the Steering Committee of GSEF and the concrete registration procedure is detailed in a separate document.

4.2. Withdrawal: A member may withdraw its membership by informing the GSEF Secretariat in a written format. Withdrawal procedures are stated in a separate document.

4.3. Warning and Disqualification: The GSEF Steering Committee may take the necessary steps to decide on the disqualification of a member if that member is harming or contravening the Vision, Mission, Objectives, and the Charter of GSEF. The GSEF Steering Committee shall go through the designated formalities to disqualify the member. Also a member who did not pay the membership fee for two consecutive years shall lose their membership automatically, except in the case of a specific decision made by the Steering Committee.

Article 5. Rights and solidarity of members

5.1. Rights

- 1) Every member can participate in the activities and programs of GSEF. They can also gain access to all information, resources, and records related to GSEF.
- 2) To pursue individual development and achieve common goals, a member can suggest specific ways to consolidate solidarity and cooperation. Each member can also set forth his or her view through diverse communication channels in GSEF, and fully exercise his or her rights in accordance with the decision-making process within GSEF.

5.2. Solidarity

- 1) Every member supports and collaborates in the tasks and programs promoted by GSEF.
- 2) Every member practices solidarity in the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and information needed for the expansion of the ecosystem of social and solidarity economy.
- 3) Every member pays an annual fee to contribute to GSEF's fiscal self-reliance and solidarity among all members.

CHAPTER 3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

GSEF shall have three executive organizations as follow:

- 1) General Assembly
- 2) Steering Committee
- 3) Secretariat

Article 6. General Assembly

6.1. General Assembly: The General Assembly consists of the full members of GSEF and is the highest decision-making body in the following instances:

- 1) GSEF projects and finance
- 2) Benefits of GSEF members
- 3) Election of chair-city, co-chair city and co-chairs, and steering committee members
- 4) Selection of host city for the next General Assembly
- 5) Amendment of the GSEF Charter
- 6) Dissolution of GSEF
- 7) Other important agendas regarding GSEF organizations and their management
- 8) Location of the Secretariat

6.2. Governance of the General Assembly : any decision at the General Assembly, except those on dissolution of GSEF and amendment of the Charter, are made by the majority vote of the full members present unless the General Assembly reaches the agreement by deliberation.

6.3. Hosting the General Assembly

- 1) GSEF's General Assembly will be hosted biennially and its host city shall be decided at the General Assembly.
- 2) A local government that wants to host the next General Assembly should submit a proposal and an official letter from its representative to the GSEF Secretariat at least 90 days before the opening of the General Assembly.
- 3) A local government that has been chosen as the host city for the next General Assembly should form a public-private organizing committee and submit its 'plan of action' to the GSEF Secretariat one year before the next General Assembly.
- 4) The host local government of the next General Assembly of GSEF shall be in full charge of the overall preparation for the General Assembly through an agreement with the Secretariat.
- 5) A provisional General Meeting of GSEF may take place with the agreement of two-thirds (2/3) of the current members of the GSEF Steering Committee.

6.4. Amendment of the Charter: the amendment of the Charter shall be decided when at least two-thirds (2/3) of the current full members are present and with the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the full members present.

6.5. Dissolution of GSEF : the dissolution of GSEF shall be decided when at least two-thirds (2/3) of the current full members are present and with the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the full members present.

Article 7. Chair-City, Host City, Co-Chair Cities, and Steering Committee

7.1. GSEF elects a chair-city, a host city, co-chair cities, and sets up a steering committee.

7.2. Chair-city and Co-presidents

- 1) A Chair-city is elected at the General Assembly. The mayor of the elected chair-city and a representative from a social and solidarity economy network member in the chair-city shall be the co-presidents of GSEF.
- 2) A chair-city represents GSEF and presides over the General Assembly of GSEF.
- 3) The tenure for chair-city and co-presidents is 2 years and they may serve in consecutive terms.
- 4) The host city of the GSEF Forum shall take the role of the chair-city in the absence of the chair-city due to unexpected circumstances.
- 5) If a local government that is a full member wishes to run for office, it needs to express its intention by submitting a document to the GSEF Secretariat 60 days before the next General Assembly and the GSEF Secretariat must inform all the members promptly.

- 6) When one of the co-presidents is unable to perform his/her duties due to the expiration of the term of office or a vacancy during his/her term, the person acting on his/her behalf shall automatically take over and notify the steering committee of the fact.

7.3. Host City and Co-Chair Cities

- 1) The host city and co-chair cities are elected at the General Assembly.
- 2) The city hosting the next GSEF General Assembly and Forum will become the Co-chair city hosting the GSEF Forum.
- 3) The host city shall establish a Forum Organizing Committee composed of the representatives of the local government and the social and solidarity economy network in the region.
- 4) For the Co-chair hosting the GSEF Forum, the representative of the local government and the agreed representative of social and solidarity economy organizations of the region shall take the role of co-presidents.
- 5) Mandates of Co-chair cities/organizations may be undertaken by either local government or the social and solidarity economy network to represent their respective region/continent.
- 6) The host city of the GSEF Forum and co-chair cities/organizations must make every effort to promote the GSEF network and activities in their respective region.
- 7) Co-chair cities (organizations) shall plan and organize regional policy dialogues or corresponding regional events at least once a year.
- 8) The GSEF co-chair organizations carry the GSEF strategy forward in their regions, and are equipped with the appropriate communication tools to do so.
- 9) The tenure for the co-chair cities (organizations) is 2 years and they may serve consecutive terms.
- 10) To be a candidate for host city or co-chair cities (organizations), the document of intention should be submitted to the GSEF secretariat 60 days prior to the next General Assembly, and the Secretariat must inform all the members promptly.

7.4. The Structure and role of the Steering Committee

- 1) The Steering Committee of GSEF consists of two co-presidents from the chair-city, two co-presidents from the host city of the GSEF Forum, two representatives from the co-chair cities (organizations) for each continent, and elected steering committee members. The number of all Steering Committee members should not exceed 20.
- 2) All members of the Steering Committee except the representatives of the host city of the next GSEF Forum and General Assembly are elected at the General Assembly. The tenure for the members of the Steering Committee is 2 years and they may serve consecutive terms.

- 3) When the Steering Committee member is unable to perform his/her duties due to the expiration of the term of office or due to a vacancy during his/her term of office, in the case of an ex officio position, the successor to the position will automatically be appointed. In the case of an elected position, the co-chair of the relevant region recommends a replacement to the Steering Committee, and the Steering Committee appoints a new Steering Committee member through the review process. However, if the remaining term of office is less than 6 months, a new Steering Committee member will not be appointed.
- 4) If a member wants to be a candidate to join the Steering Committee, it should express its intention by submitting a document to the GSEF Secretariat according to the rules agreed by the Secretariat based on broad geographic representation and the balance in the ratio of local governments and social and solidarity economy organizations.
- 5) In constituting the Steering Committee, the balance in the ratio of the local government members and social and solidarity economy network members should be maintained reasonably.
- 6) The Steering Committee can appoint specialists of social and solidarity economy or related fields as advisors for the improvement of GSEF activities and programs and the advisors can be invited to the Steering Committee by the request of the Steering Committee or the Secretariat without the right to vote.
- 7) Steering Committee members must attend the quarterly Steering Committee meeting and may be removed from their position as a Steering Committee member if they fail to attend the Steering Committee meetings three times in a row without prior notice.
- 8) The Secretary General must attend the Steering Committee meeting and performs an administrative role in the committee without a right to vote.
- 9) Members wishing to join the Steering Committee shall express their intention in writing to the Secretariat no later than 60 days before the next General Assembly, and the Secretariat shall notify all members thereof without delay.

7.5. Functions of the Steering Committee : the Steering Committee of GSEF should hold an official meeting at least once a year. The committee shall be responsible for auditing, execution of GSEF projects, review of membership applications, and review of host city candidates for the General Assembly.

Article 8. Secretariat

8.1. Secretariat

- 1) The co-chairs shall appoint the secretary of the GSEF Secretariat, which shall be approved by the Steering Committee.
- 2) GSEF shall establish its Secretariat, and the location of the secretariat may be in the chair city or the hosting city of the GSEF Forum, and the final decision on this will be made by the General Assembly.

- 3) The Secretariat should be in charge of the execution and reporting of all decisions at the General Assembly and the Steering Committee. It should support the organization of the General Assembly and other meetings in this regard.
- 4) GSEF should be responsible for all budgetary management of its Secretariat. The city hosting the GSEF Secretariat can provide extra staff and bears the expenses of management, including personnel expenses of the Secretary General and staff under the authority and within the budget of the hosting city.
- 5) The Secretariat shall employ staff for the Secretariat according to its needs and should conclude a hiring contract according to international labor standards.

8.2. Special Division: The Steering Committee may manage a special division for specific projects in the Secretariat if necessary.

8.3. Advisory Committee

- 1) The Advisory Committee is a consultative and advisory body. Advisory Committee members may be called upon at any time and in any situation to assist, support or advise the General Secretariat.
- 2) The Advisory Committee is not a decision-making body.
- 3) The Advisory Committee ensures that the GSEF maintains an independent international dynamic in favor of promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy.
- 4) The Advisory Committee is made up of a maximum of ten members. It is open to people with different levels of expertise in the SSE sectors. It is made up of resource persons for policy dialogues and capacity-building programs.
- 5) Members of the Advisory Committee may propose new members. New appointments are not subject to a vote by the Steering Committee. The Secretariat must inform the Steering Committee of the appointment and departure of a member.
- 6) The term of office of Advisory Committee members is not limited in time.
- 7) Members of the Advisory Committee must represent the different geographical areas of the world.

CHAPTER 4. FINANCING

Article 9. Source of revenue

9.1. GSEF's source of revenue is as follows:

- 1) Annual Membership Fee. The Steering Committee shall decide the annual membership fee rate by taking into consideration the type, size and financial capacity of the members. The Steering Committee may decide on exceptional cases involving the financial and economic status of particular members and may suggest reasonable alternatives.
- 2) Funds for joint projects that are raised by local governments, international organizations or acknowledged private organizations including GSEF members.

- 3) Special donations such as voluntary donations from members and non-members.
- 4) Profits through selling published materials, event fees and various contracts.
- 5) Non-financial donations

Article 10. Expenses

10.1. GSEF is responsible for its own operating expenses, including its Secretariat's administrative expenses and the provisional budget for the organization of the General Assembly, and other extra expenses acknowledged by the Steering Committee.

10.2. Expenses for projects: GSEF's projects or activities proposed by a specific local government shall be discussed and expenses shall be borne by the local government that proposed the project. Expenses necessary for the joint project are shared by the cities participating in the project. However, if the majority of the members present at the General Assembly attended by more than half of the registered members agree, part of the expenses may be subsidized or compensated by membership fees depending on the purpose and performance of the project.

10.3. Expenses for hosting the General Assembly: the host city of the General Assembly shall prepare the budget for hosting the General Assembly.

10.4. Fund: GSEF can use its fund to support social and solidarity economy in each area.

10.5. The fiscal year for GSEF starts on January 1st and ends on December 31st of each year. At the end of each fiscal year, the Steering Committee shall examine the account book submitted by the Secretariat and if necessary, the committee may take further review through a public audit board.

CHAPTER 5. SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION

11.1. This Charter shall take effect from the date of its approval by the General Assembly.