

32nd CIRIEC International Congress

“The Public, Social and Cooperative Economy in the Digital Revolution”

FINAL DECLARATION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CIRIEC

Liège, 1 June 2018

The CIRIEC General Assembly, which met on June 1, 2018 in Liège, in the aftermath of the international congress attended by some 400 delegates from some 30 countries from all over the world, adopted the following declaration:

The dazzling acceleration of the digitization of society and its ever-increasing implications for everyday life are profoundly changing production, distribution and consumption patterns.

If the new digital technologies generate the hope of seeing the implementation of progress solutions for the populations and improvement of their well-being, they also raise fears that all these technological advances based on artificial intelligence will end up enslaving humanity for the benefit of some world giants of the economy and finance. The implications of digital technology on the organisation of societies and on relationships between people are in fact such that beyond the positive prospects for improving living conditions in our territories, they can also entail dangers in terms of ethics, democracy and increasing inequalities.

In this situation of unprecedented acceleration of time, and given the risks of diverting what should be considered as progress for the populations, it is essential that the actors of the public, social and cooperative economy seize all these subjects. Indeed, it is essential that this extraordinary technological promise offered by digital technology be transformed into economic, social, democratic and environmental progress.

Digital tools and artificial intelligence offer a great opportunity to meet these challenges of the future by creating new relationships between organizations and between people: Implementation of shared projects, service improvement provided to citizens, development of the so-called collaborative economy, socially responsible finance, organisation of new forms of solidarity, implementation of new modes of democratic governance and citizenship exercise, etc... They also offer people the opportunity to be actors of their future, through collective public enterprises, social and cooperative economy, by appropriating economic mechanisms and institutions, instead of being passively consumers as the global giants of international trade prompt them to do.

This is an immense field of investigation that is opening up for CIRIEC, which, in this new changing world, commits to continuing scientific research on economic models whose vocation is the collective interest and the satisfaction of social needs, so that our societies are more human, more social and more supportive and solidarity-based.

Alain ARNAUD,
Former President of CIRIEC (2016-18)
Liège, June 1, 2018