

Social economy businesses should consider scaling up for greater impact

Businesses in the social economy should be ambitious and scale up responsibly, while staying true to their core values. This was the message of Hilde Vernailen, CEO of Belgian insurance group P&V at the recent Social Economy Meeting organised by the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Financials in social economy are at the core of transitions

Financial groups such as P&V Group are not often associated with the social economy. This is certainly the case in Belgium, where the social economy mainly consists of non-profit organisations and small businesses. However, in European countries as the Netherlands, France, Germany and Finland, cooperative and mutual insurers represent about 50% of the market.

Hilde Vernailen: “The insurance sector plays an important role in society by protecting individuals, families, businesses and organisations, contributing to their peace of mind and well-being.



Cooperatives and mutuals in the financial sector operate with that societal role as first driver. We are convinced that a strong cooperative and mutual financial sector can contribute to a better world. Given the huge challenges our societies are facing and the transition we need to make, this is more relevant than ever. This is why I call on politicians in Europe and all countries to take ownership on the societal role of the financial sector for the good of people.”

Think big and scale up

In order to deliver on its aim of offering protection to even more people and to be inclusive, P&V Group needs to scale up. By doing so, it can mutualise risks in the different branches it insures, and it is able to invest in prevention. Over recent years, P&V Group has been growing 1.5 times the average growth in the Belgian insurance market and it is fully intended to maintaining this growth in the coming years.

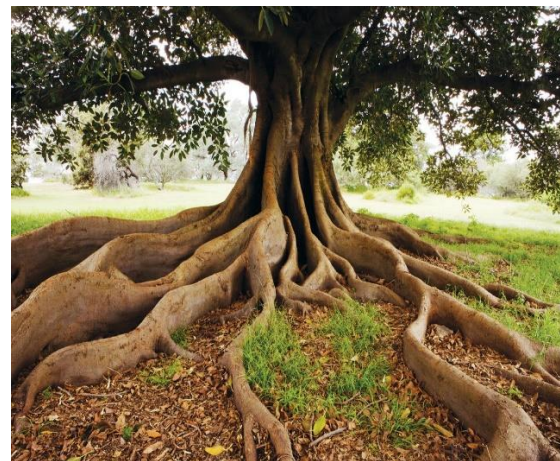




Hilde Vernailen: “Being big is not a goal as such, but thinking big is necessary if you want to have real impact on society and create a better world for people. Our vision and ambition go even beyond insurance. As a bigger player, we consider it our responsibility to help other players within the social economy to realise their projects and to scale up. We invest in social economy projects and provide financial support for cooperatives in various sectors other than insurance.”

Stay true to the core values

Hilde Vernailen urges other businesses in the social economy to consider scaling up if possible in order to increase their impact. In that process, it is however important to stay true to their core values.



Hilde Vernailen: “As you grow, there is always the danger to lose your roots and you must build in safeguards to prevent this. First, it is important to ensure that you remain permanently anchored to your core values by translating them in your business rules and corporate culture. Also remember that you are developing your business to create value for people: money should never be the driver, people are. You also need to make sure your business model is resilient by creating financial buffers: profit is not a goal as such but a tool to build up resilience. And finally, you also need to be involved in society and make sure you stay relevant regarding new issues coming up. It is important to be the cooperative of the future for people, not of the past.”

P&V Group

P&V Group is a cooperative insurance group created in 1907 by the labour movement. Today it is number 6 on the Belgian insurance market with more than 1.000.000 people, businesses and organisations insured. Its aim is to offer protection to as many people as possible, by making insurance accessible and inclusive and by investing in prevention, all in a sustainable way and thanks to the strong commitment of its employees. It does this through various distribution channels allowing it to be as close as possible to its customers.

As a cooperative, P&V Group applies the [Cooperative principles of the ICA](#) (International Cooperative Alliance) as a framework for decision making and to shape its strategy.