

ADVANCING SOCIAL IMPACT

**BEST PRACTICES IN
EUROPEAN SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
ADVOCACY**

2023

Advancing Social Impact: Best Practices in European Social Entrepreneurship Advocacy



Lietuvos Respublikos
socialinės apsaugos
ir darbo ministerija

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Introduction

In an era characterised by heightened awareness and a growing emphasis on sustainable and impactful business practices, social entrepreneurship is at the forefront of innovative solutions to societal challenges. This research embarks on a journey to explore and understand the dynamic landscape of social entrepreneurship advocacy across European countries, to uncover best practices that contribute to the advancement of this transformative movement.

The impetus for this study stems from the fact that social entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful force for positive change, particularly in times of crises. To capture the nuances of its advocacy, we delve into the strategies, initiatives and challenges faced by both national umbrella organisations and international networks dedicated to promoting social economy and entrepreneurship.

Using a robust methodology, our research seamlessly integrates desk research with in-depth interviews. The comprehensive approach includes the analysis of open resources, website data, publications, press releases and articles. In addition, representatives from national organisations and international networks were interviewed, providing invaluable insights into their efforts.

Our research aims not only to identify and analyse best practices, but also to identify practical recommendations for formulating effective advocacy strategies for social entrepreneurship. The scope of our research spans national and international levels, allowing us to draw connections between localised efforts and broader, collaborative initiatives. By presenting a panoramic view of the advocacy landscape, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on social entrepreneurship and catalyse positive change.

This research serves as a comprehensive catalogue for those passionate about promoting social entrepreneurship and advocating for its role in building a more equitable and sustainable future. Through the lens of diverse European experiences, we aim to illuminate the way forward for individuals, organisations and policymakers committed to unlocking the full potential of social entrepreneurship.

Methodology

The research methodology adopted a comprehensive approach, combining desk research and in-depth interviews with key representatives of both national umbrella organisations and international networks associated with the social economy and social entrepreneurship in European countries. The methodology aimed to gather insights from a variety of sources in order to enhance the depth and breadth of the study.

Data collection

The research methodology used for this study combined desk research aiming at a comprehensive analysis of open resources, website data, publications, press releases and articles related to social economy and social entrepreneurship. Information was collected from a variety of sources, including

National organisations:

Albania - Partners Albania

Croatia - Act Grupa

Finland - Valo-Valmennusyhdistys

Germany - Social Entrepreneurship Network Deutschland

Ireland - Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland

Latvia - Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia

Netherlands - Social Enterprise NL

Serbia - KorSE

United Kingdom - Social Enterprise UK

International Networks

DIESES Network

ENSIE Network

Euclid Network

Social Economy Europe

In addition, insights were gathered through interviews with representatives of organisations. The interviews focused on gathering first-hand insights into the best practices of these organisations in the field of social entrepreneurship advocacy.

Analysis

The data collected was subjected to rigorous analysis in order to draw key lessons and best practices from the target organisations. By examining the strategies, initiatives and outcomes of each organisation, the research aimed to uncover effective approaches to social entrepreneurship advocacy.

Practical recommendations

Building on the findings, the research culminated in the formulation of practical recommendations for social entrepreneurship advocacy strategies. These recommendations are intended to provide actionable insights and guidance for individuals, organisations and policy makers involved in promoting and supporting social entrepreneurship initiatives.

In summary, this research used a multifaceted approach, combining desk research and interviews, to collect, analyse and distil valuable insights from national and international organisations. The resulting recommendations aim to contribute to the improvement of social entrepreneurship promotion strategies in European countries.

Foreign Practices Analysis

ALBANIA

In 2016, the Republic of Albania approved Law No. 65/2016, focusing on Social Enterprises. This law addresses the establishment and operations of social enterprises, outlining specific requirements and criteria for obtaining and maintaining SE status. Despite the challenges identified and discussed by various ecosystem actors with the responsible ministry (Ministry of Health and Social Protection) during the approval process, the law was enacted. After approval, relevant by-laws were expected within six months, but delays occurred, and the legal package remained incomplete until 2019. The law's implementation was stalled until 2019 due to the absence of critical by-laws.

As of May 2019, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) issued the first instruction and call for applications for registering and obtaining SE status. Despite the open call, only 13 Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) applied by April 2022. Among these, only 9 NPOs received SE status. According to the analytical materials, prepared by Partners Albania, such a critique is a consequence of the law-making process by the side of policy decision-makers without cooperation with other social entrepreneurship players.¹

There is an independent NGO Partners Albania for Change and Development, established in 2001, which is an autonomous Albanian non-governmental organisation dedicated to fostering civil society and promoting cross-sector collaboration. Its mission is to fortify democratic institutions and promote economic development. In this regard, this makes Partners Albania as one of the key stakeholders in social entrepreneurship development.²

One of the main issues for the organisation is dealing with much criticism of adopted social entrepreneurship law. Among the main points being criticised are the absence of expected benefits to the social entrepreneurs and other players in the sector, limitations to being a non-profits and others that makes an opportunity to get the social entrepreneurship status unattractive. In such circumstances Partners Albania became especially active in

- *making public discussions and events inviting the Ministers and other TOP-level officials;*
- *making public statements, drafting suggestions and policy recommendations.*

¹ Era Sherifaj, *Social Enterprises Status: Ambiguities and Opportunities for Enhancement*, Tirana, 2022 (<https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/the-status-of-social-enterprise/>).

² <https://www.partnersalbania.org/about/introduction/>

The case of Albania provides us with the lessons learned of **mutual cooperation importance in the policy-making process**, otherwise, the policy makers fall at the risk of passing the law that does not contribute to the development, but limits and creates even obstacles for development in the concrete sector. In our case this is the sector of social entrepreneurship.

In such a context, the main advocacy goal is to stimulate changes to existing law or introduce changes through the sub legal acts. This is of high priority for the Partners Albania organisation, which issued a number of **recommendations**:

- Revise the definition of social entrepreneurship and criteria to obtaining this status;
- When revisioning the definition, in addition to WISEs, foresee the other forms of social enterprise;
- Complement the current social entrepreneurship law with the by-laws by making changes to existing legal acts;
- **Ensure “frequent communication and consultation with all actors involved** in the process regarding the possible modifications, implications or interpretations during the implementation of the law, so that these changes reflect the reality and prevent problems that may arise later during implementation in practice”.³
- Periodically **holding** open **info-sessions** with organisations interested in obtaining the SE status.

³ Era Sherifaj, *Social Enterprises Status: Ambiguities and Opportunities for Enhancement*, Tirana, 2022, p.31

CROATIA

In Croatia, a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of social entrepreneurship was carefully formulated through an inclusive process of extensive consultations involving a wide range of stakeholders. The main objective of this strategy was to promote the creation and expansion of social enterprises in Croatia by creating a more supportive institutional and financial environment. The strategy emerged through a collaborative, bottom-up approach, led by a coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs) and social enterprises in partnership with the government. In line with European Union (EU) policies, in particular the Social Business Initiative (SBI), the strategy carefully outlined criteria for identifying social enterprises and identified key focus areas for improving the institutional environment.

Outlined across four pivotal pillars, the strategy sought to:

- 1) enhance legislative and institutional frameworks;
- 2) establish a robust and supportive financial infrastructure;
- 3) champion social entrepreneurship through educational initiatives; and
- 4) elevate the visibility of social enterprises.

The initiative also brought together different stakeholders, including relevant ministries, national government institutions, local authorities, regional development agencies, CSOs, social enterprises, financial institutions, and academia.

The Strategy was drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System (MLPS) and adopted by the Croatian Government on April 2015. The MLPS – which was also the managing authority for the European Social Fund (ESF) in 2007-13 and 2014-20 – established the Department for Preparation and Implementation of the Projects from the Field of Social Entrepreneurship to co-ordinate the Strategy's implementation. The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs and the National Foundation for Civil Society Development are among the Strategy's most important partners and co-owners. Other co-owners within government include the Croatian Employment Service, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. Partners from other sectors – including research institutes, educational institutions, vocational institutions, regional development agencies, financial institutions, local and regional authorities, CSOs, social enterprises, media and social partners – will also help implement the Strategy.⁴

The measures and activities advocated by the Strategy (e.g. increasing the number and sustainability of social enterprises and their employees) are included in the ESF Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020. A total around EUR 37 million (euros) – EUR 32 million from the ESF and the remainder from the public budget – have been allocated to implementing the Strategy.⁵

⁴ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264268500-7-en.pdf?expires=1698074767&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=6169641D02A46608B7BD8B8CEAAE8B70>

⁵ See Ibid.

Unfortunately, tangible progress remains elusive as there has been no real implementation to date. The lack of data on the impact, efficiency or cost-effectiveness of the activities undertaken is due to a general lack of commitment on the part of political actors. Social entrepreneurship remains on the periphery of the political agenda, resulting in a sluggish pace of implementation of the planned strategic measures. Despite the establishment of the institutional unit, other key activities have yet to be launched.

In this dynamic landscape, the field of social entrepreneurship is actively evolving through the efforts of civil society organisations, of which ACT Grupa⁶ is a notable actor. Founded in 2003, ACT Grupa's journey began with a spirit of activism and a robust punk attitude. The organisation started organising workshops and thematic festivals such as the *Festival of Open Technologies* and the *Book Festival*. It facilitated access to resources by setting up computer classrooms, libraries, and reading rooms, and offering guidance on best practices. Over time, the ACT Group became **the first Croatian consortium of social enterprises**. Later on, they took the initiative to create enterprises that directly addressed gaps in the Croatian ecosystem. This proactive approach led to the **creation of six independent enterprises**, each of which was designed to respond to different shortcomings in the local landscape.⁷ These companies, which they nurtured, are now autonomous and thriving in the marketplace.

At present, the organisation's primary approach to social entrepreneurship advocacy is **action-based advocacy**. Operationally, this means the following

- The organisation acts as a central **point of contact for the government** when it has specific questions or tasks related to social entrepreneurship. This includes **responding to formal requests from ministries or municipalities**, providing **clarification on whether specific enterprises meet the criteria** for being considered social enterprises, and more.
- As a business support organisation, the ACT Grupa assists various social enterprises in their development. This includes maintaining a network of mentors and implementing a number of educational and mentoring initiatives, such as
 - o **"Start something on your own"** programme - a six-month support programme for impact entrepreneurs that will run for seven years. The programme includes mentoring support for both start-up and existing social enterprises, coupled with subsequent financial support.⁸
 - o **"Fast response and recovery programme"**⁹ for social entrepreneurs, launched in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and participation in

⁶ <https://act-grupa.hr/en/>

⁷ <https://act-grupa.hr/en/o-nama/>

⁸ <https://pokreninestosvoje.hr/>

⁹ <http://podrska-poduzetnicma.hr/>

- o the "**Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**" programme, which supports young entrepreneurs.
- The organisation organises **events and festivals**, such as the Social Business Day, to promote community engagement and collaboration.
- By participating in various **research projects**, such as ESEM, the organisation contributes to the knowledge base on social entrepreneurship.
- In its communication efforts, the ACT Group focuses not only on reporting on events and activities, but also on **articulating the tangible impact of these efforts on the target groups**. The focus is on how these activities and initiatives have positively transformed the businesses they were intended to impact. This storytelling approach highlights the real-world results of the organisation's efforts and contributes to the advocacy efforts.

The ACT Grupa's vision for more effective and impactful social entrepreneurship advocacy practices revolves around the facilitation of

- **Promoting social public procurement:** Advocating for practices that promote social public procurement to create opportunities for social enterprises.
- **Reserved Contracts:** Supporting the allocation of reserved contracts to social enterprises and encouraging their participation in various sectors.
- **Special taxation** for social enterprises: Lobbying for tax incentives and special tax regimes tailored to support the growth and sustainability of social enterprises.
- **Creation of practical training programmes:** Encouraging the development of practical training programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting the business development of social enterprises.
- **Strong and broad information campaigns:** To promote social entrepreneurship through strong information campaigns aimed at increasing visibility. Recognising the importance of marketing, there is a need for marketing agencies to assist social entrepreneurs in their marketing and communication efforts.

In line with this vision, the ACT Group actively participates in the **Buy Social initiative** and undertakes specific activities such as

- **Connecting small social enterprises with large corporations:** Facilitating partnerships between small social enterprises and larger companies to create mutually beneficial collaborations.
- **Preparing Christmas catalogues for large companies:** Curating Christmas catalogues with products made by social entrepreneurs, promoting their goods and services within larger corporate networks.

FINLAND

The leading document and framework for social entrepreneurship development in Finland is the Strategy for Social Enterprises adopted in 2021.¹⁰ There are several issues that the strategy addresses:

- Clarify the definition of social enterprise;
- Raise awareness and visibility of the operating model;
- Promote responsible and impact-driven business skills;
- Scale up and mainstream the social innovations of social enterprises;
- Promote the employment of people with partial disability or otherwise disadvantaged in the labour market;
- Make statistics and data collection more systematic and increase and better exploit research activities;
- Develop new models for financing impact.¹¹

The development of the **strategy was included in the government programme**, especially in the task of designing initiatives and programmes for the integration and employment of vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. A **ministerial working group was appointed** by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Economy and Employment to carry out a thorough study of what kind of programmes should be implemented to improve the employment of people with disabilities. This led to the strategy adopted in 2021.

The success of the strategy development process was ensured by the fact that the ministerial **working groups were led by a person who was passionate about the issue and at the same time had credibility among government stakeholders**.

Later, the **Centre of Expertise for Social Enterprises** was established to implement the strategy of **acting as a network**. The competence centre consists of 11 organisations working with different organisations and target groups. These include WISEs, SE expert organisations, alliances, foundations, educational and research institutions.¹² This ensures that the voices of different SE stakeholders are heard across the country and can serve as good practice for the development of a national social economy ecosystem.

The **Centre also is a part of the Finnish Government's Work Capacity Programme** (2019–2023)¹³ and provides guidance and advice to Finnish entrepreneurs and organisations involved in or starting social enterprises, regardless of the type of enterprise or sector, and works at regional, national and international levels to

¹⁰https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163807/TEM_2022_5.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹¹ See Ibid.

¹² <https://yyo.fi/briefly-in-english/>

¹³ <https://tem.fi/en/work-ability-programme>

implement the National Strategy for Social Enterprises. The Centre's competences and directions include the following tasks:

- ***Offer nationwide advisory and expert services***
- ***Promote research and train new social entrepreneurship experts***
- ***Provide solutions to scale up and to commercialise social innovations***
- ***Build a WISE network. Identify and scale effective models for employing WSN.***
- ***Pilot incubator programs with a collaboration network***
- ***Gather social enterprise data and statistics.***

The centre can serve as a good practice for the development of social entrepreneurship national ecosystem. At the same time, it's important to emphasise that running such a centre requires a lot of human resources and is time-consuming. In the case of the Finnish centre, it took about two years to establish contacts, build the network, organise communication and distribute the work packages among the members of the centre's network. At the same time, this model ensures coordinated work that can result in

- New social enterprises launched
- The number of awareness-raising events (forums, celebration of Social Business Days)
- Design of new social entrepreneurship courses for universities
- Provide other business support services.

GERMANY

In 2023 the German government has launched its "National Strategy" to provide comprehensive support for companies that are committed to the common good. The German government's "National Strategy for Social Innovation and Social Enterprises" is joint initiative by the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Education aims to promote a more ecological, sustainable and socially responsible economy. Goals include reducing environmental impact, eliminating human rights abuses in supply chains, and ensuring greater occupational safety and fair wages for all involved.¹⁴

In terms of the leading organisation working with social innovators and social entrepreneurs is the **Social Entrepreneurship Network Deutschland (SEND)**¹⁵ that stands out as a significant organization contributing to the development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Germany. Its journey began in 2016, culminating in official establishment through a **crowdfunding campaign** in 2017 that secured crucial initial funding. The organization's inception was a response to the existing gap, where no entity facilitated the connection between social entrepreneurs and innovators with politicians. Despite the presence of various impactful and well-known organizations in Germany, many were vocal about their grievances with politics and politicians, often overlooking the positive influence they exerted on financial resources allocated to the welfare state. The establishment of SEND aimed to address this situation and foster a more collaborative environment within the social entrepreneurship landscape.

One of the persistent challenges that the organisation faced initially and still faces today is the lack of recognition and understanding of social entrepreneurship, the lack of understanding of the differences between social inclusion and corporate social responsibility (CSR), and the issues addressed by charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Therefore, SEND was founded with the vision of **becoming an organisation that promotes and develops the social and economic ecosystem in Germany**. The organisation seeks to mediate between the political sphere and various sectors of German society, developing a social innovation ecosystem. SEND's approach is bottom-up, starting with an initial cohort of over 100 social enterprises that have joined as founding members.

Active advocacy was a central aspect of their organising efforts. This has involved the crucial task of creating **visibility and awareness**, not only with policymakers but also with the wider public. Establishing a robust presence and effectively **communicating their message to policy makers** has always been a fundamental pillar of their organisational efforts. This commitment to visibility remains an enduring aspect of their mission and continues to shape their ongoing advocacy work.

¹⁴ https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Mittelstand/national-strategy-for-social-innovations-and-social-enterprises.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

¹⁵ <https://www.send-ev.de/>

Another important aspect of their work is **community and network building**. This includes facilitating links between different social enterprises in Germany, fostering relationships that enable mutual learning.

In the early stages of its existence, the organisation recognised the lack of a defined framework for its work in Germany, particularly given the lack of attention to the issue in political discourse. In response, they took a proactive **initiative to formulate their own definition**. Over the first two years, they **initiated a participatory and exploratory process involving their members, as well as collaborating with universities and academia specialising in social innovation through interviews and working groups**. This collaborative effort resulted in the development of **their own working definition**, which served as the basis for their organisational principles. Departing from the European Union definition used by the European Commission, the organisation has identified three dimensions that encapsulate its understanding of social entrepreneurship. Prospective members are required to align with and fulfil these dimensions, creating a distinctive criterion for membership of the organisation.

The organisation has identified three essential criteria for social enterprises.

- First, enterprises must demonstrate **a clear focus on social and/or environmental objectives**, embodying a commitment to addressing societal or environmental challenges.
- Secondly, the business aspect of a social enterprise is paramount and requires the demonstration of **a sustainable business model**. This includes **the ability to operate independently of volatile grant funding**, with financial sustainability achieved through revenue streams such as the sale of services or membership fees.
- Finally, the key criterion of corporate governance is emphasised, highlighting the importance of maintaining **a sustainable organisational structure**. This includes the ethical treatment of customers and employees, as well as the responsible and sustainable use of profits.

When strategising on how to communicate and gain government support, the organisation emphasises a **deep understanding of the electoral cycle as a critical factor**. This understanding is seen as essential at both national and regional levels. **Successful integration into the electoral programme means aligning with the narrative that resonates with the political landscape and prevailing sentiments**. The organisation takes a pragmatic approach, **engaging with different political parties in Germany**, excluding extremist fractions. In navigating the diverse political landscape, the organisation recognises the flexibility and adaptability of its message, which can resonate with a spectrum of ideologies. The key is to **understand the specific party structures and find receptive individuals** who can champion the cause within their respective parties.

The organisation took a proactive approach by developing an **election campaign toolkit for its members**, accompanied by community calls to highlight an important opportunity. Recognising the critical juncture four years after its founding, the

organisation aimed to secure a place in the coalition agreement of the new German government. The strategy involved extensive engagement with politicians, emphasising the effectiveness of members who had a tangible impact on the ground. This approach sought to validate the organisation's initiatives through practical examples. Rather than relying solely on the lobbying organisation to engage with states and officials, the focus was on **empowering members to communicate directly with regional candidates**. The organisation facilitated this process by providing **templates for letters, narratives and ideas on how to approach and talk to political figures**.

Another best practice used by the organisation is to have local social enterprises volunteer as leaders in regional chapters. **These leaders are tasked with engaging with the local ecosystem in their respective states**. This strategic approach not only saves resources, but also allows advocacy efforts to move forward. By establishing a presence and working in different states in Germany, the organisation has successfully influenced the **creation of dedicated funding mechanisms and programmes specifically tailored for social entrepreneurs in some regions**. This localised success story serves as a compelling example that the organisation can leverage at the national level. By demonstrating instances where dedicated funding mechanisms have already been implemented in certain states, the organisation can effectively argue for the feasibility and impact of such initiatives, contributing to the wider acceptance and adoption of supportive policies at the national level.

In summary, the organisation's primary approach to advocacy is to maintain and strengthen links with its members. By maintaining a robust network, the organisation enables its members to develop **tailor-made products and services** to meet their specific needs. This collaborative approach goes beyond sharing information and extends to providing tailored support, including **insights into funding opportunities, potential avenues for product sales and establishing private connections with other stakeholders**. Through this member-centric strategy, the organisation not only strengthens the resilience and success of its individual members, but also collectively contributes to the growth and impact of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Germany. By prioritising these personalised connections and support mechanisms, the organisation continues to play a pivotal role in advancing its advocacy goals and fostering a thriving community of socially conscious enterprises.

IRELAND

In terms of the regulatory framework, the first National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 (launched in 2019) focuses on three main objectives:

- Raising awareness of social enterprise
- Grow and strengthen social enterprise
- Achieve better policy alignment

The Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland¹⁶ serves as the national representative body for the social enterprise sector, a role it has held for three years. Despite a modest team, the organisation has a clearly defined mission and focus in the area of advocacy and policy for social enterprise.

One of SERI's key initiatives is to work with the government to establish the first baseline data collection for the social entrepreneurship sector. Launched in 2023, this initiative aims to gather comprehensive information about social entrepreneurs, including details such as

- The nature of their activities
- Geographical reach of their activities
- Number of staff and volunteers employed, among other relevant metrics

Direct communication with policymakers at all levels is another crucial facet of our activities to raise awareness of social entrepreneurship. Awareness raising is central to the advocacy process as it is imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of what social entrepreneurship is and why it differs from traditional not-for-profit, charitable and commercial enterprises.

In this context, SERI has undertaken a concerted effort with the five **main political parties** in Ireland. Their initiative was to urge them to **appoint a spokesperson for social enterprise within their party in Parliament**. SERI then established regular channels of communication with these representatives, providing them with consistent updates through **mailings and newsletters** to ensure that they were aware of the latest developments in the sector. This strategic approach has facilitated smoother communication with political parties, as there are individuals responsible for social entrepreneurship who are regularly informed of the latest information on the sector. These designated representatives effectively act as advocates for social entrepreneurs within the Parliament.

SERI also designed the **“Social Enterprises Charter”** as a document that was distributed to politicians at different levels, in particular at regional or local levels. This charter consists of written commitments by politicians to improve their understanding of the social enterprise sector, the specific social enterprises operating in their respective regions/communities and the notable impact they are having. A key commitment

¹⁶ <https://www.socialenterprise.ie/>

within the Charter is for politicians to visit 1-2 social enterprises in their local area to gain insight into their business models, needs and challenges. This initiative has yielded positive results, significantly increasing local politicians' awareness of social enterprises and the impact they have on their communities.

These impactful initiatives, including the baseline data collection and the Social Enterprise Charter, are playing a significant role in shaping the forthcoming national policy to be published in January 2024.

SERI is actively contributing to the shaping of this policy through **close collaboration with government structures**, in particular the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland. Recognising the regular turnover of officials in the Department every three years, SERI carefully liaises with newly appointed individuals to ensure they are **well informed about the social entrepreneurship landscape**. As well as updating Irish policymakers on national developments, SERI also provides insights into the international landscape, sharing information on initiatives and events in other countries through concise **1-2 page digest**. This approach further enhances SERI's credibility and confidence in the sector.

The organization's dynamic approach to decision-making and advocacy initiatives involves not only a Board of Directors but also a **Practitioner Council** composed of 15 to 20 individuals actively managing social enterprises on a daily basis. This Council serves as an invaluable sounding board for ideas and initiatives, offering practical and candid feedback during monthly meetings. The members, with their hands-on experience, provide insights from the real situation on the market. Their proactive engagement serves as a preemptive measure, allowing the organization to refine its approaches and address challenges before they are presented to the public. In this collaborative structure, the Practitioner Council emerges as a key asset, contributing to the organization's effectiveness in the field of advocacy.

LATVIA

Latvia is among the countries where social entrepreneurship is legally recognized and institutionalised. The policy making process started in 2014 after adoption of the Social Entrepreneurship Concept by the Latvian Parliament. Following the Concept, in 2015 there was formed a Parliamentary Group to develop social entrepreneurship law. That was also the year of establishing the **Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia (SEAL)**¹⁷.

The social entrepreneurship law itself was adopted in 2017 and in 2018 it started to work. So it took about four years to create the legal frameworks after adopting the concept document. This process became possible thanks to the ESF financial support.

Among the key players in the field of social entrepreneurship in Latvia is the **Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia**, which is a member organisation dedicated to fostering the growth of social entrepreneurship in Latvia. SEAL unites like-minded organisations, businesses, and individuals who share the conviction that social entrepreneurship holds immense potential in Latvia and are prepared to actively contribute to the advancement and fortification of this sector.

As a national umbrella organisation, SEAL main activities are

- **Advocacy for social entrepreneurship at local, regional, and national levels**, playing a key role in developing the Law on Social Entrepreneurship. SEAL collaborates with various stakeholders, including municipalities and support organisations, to create a conducive environment for social entrepreneurship in Latvia.
- SEAL **enhances the capacity** of its members by providing a platform for knowledge-sharing and experience development. It facilitates joint activities, efficient information exchange, and offers up-to-date information on financing and cooperation opportunities.
- SEAL also focuses on **informing the public** about social entrepreneurship through participation in events and the creation of a network of ambassadors across Latvia. We organise the annual Social Entrepreneurship Forum, the industry's largest event, and maintain the most extensive source of information in Latvian about social entrepreneurship.

With advocacy for social entrepreneurship as part of its organisational strategy, SEAL **works continuously with the Ministry of Welfare** inviting the high-level speakers and representatives to different events and simultaneously working with the ministry's staff on implementing projects and initiatives at the national level. In addition, on the national level SEAL communicates with other ministries regarding the questions with social entrepreneurship dimensions. These could be institutions taking care of resocialization of vulnerable groups, taking care of environment and waste

¹⁷ <https://sua.lv/en/about-us/>

management strategies, procurement ecosystem development, etc. With these ones SEAL manages **conducting meetings and focus-groups, preparing reports and recommendations, designs projects and initiatives to promote social entrepreneurship** as an approach to address the mentioned issues.

After the adoption of the Social Entrepreneurship Act, the **work with municipalities** became even more important to advocate changes on the local level. This is because the legal definition and also the law gives more possibilities to the municipalities and public bodies themselves to act more in favour of social entrepreneurs. SEAL implements the following approaches in its work

- **Informing municipalities**¹⁸ about the possibilities and what they can do for social entrepreneurs operating in their territory. As a result, the local government may be able to plan some concrete initiatives for social entrepreneurs and include them in the planning documents;
- Encouragement of municipalities to **offer their premises or resources** to social entrepreneurs free of charge;
- Carrying out **additional initiatives and projects** to promote the development of social entrepreneurship in their municipalities. Such initiatives could be the **national level conferences** with the presence of the President of the State and with the invitation of the representatives of the municipalities or other events;
- The **sharing of good practices** from one municipality with other municipalities. This could be done through webinars with the municipality representative sharing the successful support and cooperation with social entrepreneurs and the benefits the municipality gets from such cooperation;
- **Visiting each municipality** on a regular basis to analyse how they are set up and advise them on how to work effectively with local social entrepreneurs. Such field visits are important because local authorities are often either unaware of the work of social enterprises in the municipality or do not consider the possibility of cooperation. SEAL's visits also include the practice of **collecting questionnaires** about the community's plans, needs and achievements. This will enable SEAL to provide the necessary support to help the community achieve its plans.
- **Preparation of toolboxes** (instructions, case studies, policy papers) for municipal authorities on how to cooperate with local social entrepreneurs or what kind of events or other initiatives they can implement, etc;¹⁹
- **Creating regional think tanks** that bring together municipalities, regional NGOs, social entrepreneurs and business support organisations to create an action plan to support social entrepreneurship in the region.

¹⁸ For more examples of working with municipalities, visit the following resources: Successful Partnerships between Municipalities and Community Based Organisations <https://sua.lv/en/successful-partnerships-between-municipalities-and-community-based-organisations/>

5 useful steps to create cooperation between local governments and community organisations <https://sua.lv/en/5-useful-steps-to-create-cooperations/>

¹⁹ Roadmap for Establishment of Collaboration (Guide & Checklists) <https://sua.lv/en/roadmap-for-establishment-of-collaboration/>

Consequently, SEAL's strategy for working with municipalities is to establish and maintain effective communication, to equip them with knowledge and skills, and to provide them with practical tools and instruments to carry out local initiatives for the development of social entrepreneurship on their own.

At the same time, having an ongoing communication with national and local authorities does not assure effective advocacy strategies for social entrepreneurship. In this regard, SEAL puts its strong attention to raising awareness initiatives to make the voice of social entrepreneurs strong and understandable to the civic society. This is an ongoing task for the team since on the open discourse there might arise narratives of the weak effectiveness of the law on social entrepreneurship or even those like there was no point to adopt the similar law. Such arguments often rise from lack of awareness of the social entrepreneurship concept and the law itself.

NETHERLANDS

The beginnings of the social enterprise movement in the Netherlands date back to 2012, initiated by the national organisation Social Enterprise NL. Initially, the main focus of the organisation was to raise awareness about social enterprise, give a voice to the movement and engage in advocacy. As a result, Social Enterprise NL began its journey as a network and membership organisation, starting with a group of 50 entrepreneurs and growing to 450 members today. This approach to working with social entrepreneurs became a strategic imperative for the organisation.

Recognising the importance of amplifying the voices of social entrepreneurs seeking recognition and a distinct status in the economic landscape, Social Enterprise NL introduced national social enterprise monitors. These monitors served as a mechanism to capture the perspectives of social entrepreneurs seeking recognition and special status from various stakeholders, including businesses, consumers and government. The challenge of securing recognition remains pressing as any organisation can currently claim to be a social enterprise.

There are different legal forms for social enterprises in the Netherlands. The choice of legal form depends on their business activities and their approach to creating impact and contributing to societal goals. In addition, the Dutch legislator is in the process of introducing a new label to clarify the definition of a social enterprise. This label, provisionally called BVm, includes the term 'maatschappelijk', meaning 'social' private limited company. The proposal is targeted at social enterprises with the legal status of a private limited company. However, no final decision has yet been taken.²⁰

In order to keep the issue of recognition of social entrepreneurship in the spotlight of the government, the Social Enterprises NL implements the following initiatives towards the government

- Organisation of an **annual Social Enterprises Government Conference**. The conferences always focus on the role of social entrepreneurs in broad prosperity, social and economic development, circular economy, labour issues, etc.²¹
- Issuing **public statements and position papers to the government** or, during election periods, appealing to political parties to include social entrepreneurship in their political programmes or further coalition agreements.²²

The organisation continues to work on the promotion of social entrepreneurship as such. In this context, in 2017 Social Enterprises NL initiated the establishment of an independent committee that developed **the Code Social Enterprises** - principles that

²⁰ Coline Serres & Tine De Moor, *Social Enterprises in the Netherlands: Towards More Institutional Diversity?*, *The International Handbook of Social Enterprise Law*, pp 861–880, 2022.

²¹ <https://overheidscongres.social-enterprise.nl/>

²² Here is an example of a position paper "Value and encouragement for social entrepreneurship" made before the national elections https://www.social-enterprise.nl/application/files/6816/9088/2843/Sociale_onderneming_in_verkiezingsprogrammas.pdf

show what social entrepreneurship stands for.²³ Later in 2018 the independent **Foundation of the Code of Social Enterprises** was established, which **manages the code and the register** in the Netherlands – a process of verification and recognition as social enterprises.²⁴

Being guided by the “impact first” principle, Social Enterprise NL also elaborated recommendations and guide for impact measurement and management. The **“Impact Path” guide** provides entrepreneurs with practical tools and recommendations for assessing impact. Its importance extends beyond the individual entrepreneur, and as more entrepreneurs adopt this guide, a common set of indicators will emerge. This collective adoption promotes standardisation through daily use, with the added benefit of aligning entrepreneurs and stakeholders, including financiers and municipalities, who will increasingly communicate in a common language of impact. Local authorities can play a role in promoting The Impact Path by introducing entrepreneurs to the tool and asking for specific data through its use.²⁵

In order to ensure visibility and strengthen the capacity of social entrepreneurs in the market, Social Enterprise NL implements the Buy Social initiative, which promotes

- social procurement
- Involving municipalities in cooperation with social entrepreneurs
- Joint impact initiatives of social enterprises and traditional companies.²⁶

²³https://www.codesocialeondernemingen.nl/application/files/2615/5491/1784/Principles_Code_Social_Enterprises_English_version.pdf

²⁴<https://www.codesocialeondernemingen.nl/english>

²⁵https://impactpad.nl/wp-content/uploads/Het_Impactpad_EN_2020.pdf

²⁶ The best “Buy Social” practices can be found here <https://buy-social.nl/inkopen/best-practices/>

SERBIA

The journey towards Social Entrepreneurship legislation in Serbia was initiated by the Coalition for Solidarity Economy Development (CoSED)²⁷, established in 2010 and formally registered in 2019. Serving as a pivotal network, CoSED is dedicated to advancing solidarity economy principles in Serbia and plays a central role in advocating for and shaping social entrepreneurship laws in the country.

What sets this initiative apart is that CoSED, being founded by civil society organizations, underscores the grassroots nature of the social entrepreneurship policy-making process. Unlike some legislative endeavors, there was no political impetus behind the adoption of the Social Entrepreneurship Law. Unlike laws required for Serbia's EU accession, this legislation was not obligatory. Consequently, every significant step in the law-making process, from coalition meetings to drafting and subsequent advocacy, was spearheaded by CoSED as a prominent civil society actor.

Prior to its formal registration, the coalition operated as an informal initiative, engaging with various social entrepreneurship stakeholders nationwide. Upon achieving official coalition status, the organization delved into conducting comprehensive research projects and initiatives aimed at uncovering the genuine needs of the sector. This involved a series of ecosystem assessments and the formulation of recommendations. A few noteworthy examples include:

- **An analysis of the political and economic framework supporting your social and economic development** in Serbia before the SE law was passed²⁸
- **The mapping of (non-traditional) actors of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)** in Serbia, conducted by the CoSED in late 2021 and spring of 2022²⁹
- **Database of Social Enterprises** in Serbia³⁰

It's worth noting that the coalition has continued these activities even after the adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship. For example, a document with **recommendations for the development of social entrepreneurship in Serbia**³¹ was presented to the Serbian government.

Furthermore, CoSED has taken the initiative to facilitate communication with specific social entrepreneurship stakeholders through various means such as open meetings, focus groups, public hearings and other live events. These engagements involve a wide range of participants to discuss relevant social entrepreneurship issues.

²⁷ <https://solidarnaekonomija.rs/>

²⁸ <https://solidarnaekonomija.rs/publikacije/neophodne-mere-podrske-razvoju-sektora-socijalne-i-solidarne-ekonomije/>

²⁹ <https://www.esap.online/download/docs/European%20Pillar%20of%20Social%20Rights%20-%20SERBIA%20FINAL.pdf/bc42b88f97d0862404386aa8219f1f67.pdf>

³⁰ <https://solidarnaekonomija.rs/baza-socijalnih-preduzeca/>

³¹ <https://smartkolektiv.org/aktuelnosti/korse-preporuke-za-razvoj-socijalnog-prduzetnistva-u-srbiji/>

CoSED actively seeks to diversify the field of social entrepreneurship by **engaging different entities, including academia** (in order to engage more expertise for research conducting and promote the students to do their own social economy research project), **new forms of cooperatives** (such as housing or energy cooperatives) and the **media** (in order to promote the social entrepreneurship business model). While many of these partners may not be mainstream, the involvement of smaller entities amplifies the voice of social entrepreneurship for different audiences.

In particular, communication with government stakeholders is the biggest challenge. Difficulties arise in obtaining feedback on research papers or recommendations and in initiating the design of a national strategy or action plan for social entrepreneurship. As a result, the coalition has effectively taken the lead in the policy-making process by presenting a draft law.

At the same time, a common for other countries trend emerges: **communication with politicians becomes significantly more fruitful during election periods**. Social entrepreneurship issues can find a place in political programmes or become areas of interest for specific political parties and influential stakeholders. This underlines the strategic timing of engagement to maximise impact within the political landscape.

UNITED KINGDOM

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) serves as the membership organisation for social enterprises in the UK. Leading the world's largest network of businesses with a social purpose, we collectively strive to foster a fairer economy and a sustainable future for all. SEUK's mission is to advocate for social enterprise, showcase the impactful contributions they make, and influence decision-makers to cultivate an environment conducive to their success.³²

The SEUK is actively working in the field of advocacy with the aim to create the most favourable conditions for social entrepreneurs to grow and develop. Among the core advocacy goals of the SEUK are the following:

- **Collaboration** extensively **with politicians** across the political spectrum to shape policies that foster the growth of social enterprises. This involves: Facilitating access to finance for social enterprises through initiatives such as social investment, grant programs, and other activities.
- **Promoting procurement from social enterprises** by encouraging the development of the Social Value Act³³ within both the public and private sectors. For this purpose SEUK designed the SE Directory³⁴, conduct yearly Social Enterprise Awards Ceremonies.
- **Streamlining the tax system** to simplify the operation and expansion of social enterprises.
- Championing the significance of **location-based infrastructure** for social enterprises through different programs and initiatives.³⁵

It is also important to mention the the SEUK works as a **secretariat of the The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)**³⁶ for Social Enterprise comprises parliamentarians who share an interest in social enterprise. Among the APPG activities is organising regular events in Westminster in the field of social entrepreneurship with invitation of different speakers and experts. Running the secretary for APPG gives lots of opportunities to be in an ongoing contact and communication with the policy makers and maintain the voices for social entrepreneurship on the surface.

Considering the fact that social entrepreneurship is already institutionalised and there is a special legal form as a one more option for social entrepreneurs to register and run their entities, the government is not considered as a driver for other changes and development in the field. Therefore the main role in fostering any policy changes or improvements goes to the non-governmental players in the field - social entrepreneurs, business supporting organisations, experts and other stakeholders. In this regard, one of the most effective advocacy approaches is **forming alliances** with other players to make a common strong voice to the government.

³² <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/>

³³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3/enacted>

³⁴ <https://directory.socialenterprise.org.uk/s/>

³⁵ <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/evidence-policy/about-our-policy-and-influencing-strategy/>

³⁶ <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/APPG/social-enterprise>

Such an alliance is already formed in the UK called The Future Economy Alliance³⁷ (previously known as Social Economy Alliance) that brings together advocates for positive transformation from various business sectors, striving to cultivate a more robust, equitable, and environmentally conscious economic landscape in the UK. This coalition includes activists, entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders who recognize the imperative for profits to contribute to both people and the planet. Such a groundbreaking partnership unites social enterprises, cooperatives, mutuals, employee-owned businesses, social investors, community-led organisations, fundraisers, and third-sector experts who share a common vision of an economy where the entire society reaps the benefits.

The Future Economy Alliance is not an institution or team that works permanently. It is rather a **coalition that works during** some periods like during the **election process** (to ensure the new government will consider the concept of social economy in their program and concrete actions) or when **advocating some specific legal changes** like tax incentives or other.

SEUK is convinced that it is of high importance for advocacy to continuously work on raising awareness campaigns and initiatives for different stakeholders - government, business, and the general public. In this regard, SEUK's approach is to **establish cooperation with famous, big and strong players especially from the commercial sector** - like Barclays Bank, Amazon, Starbucks or other big corporates. This will contribute to a positive image of social entrepreneurship among all the other stakeholders and may lead for further investment and media attention to the sector.

In this regard, SEUK implemented a couple of media and, at the same time, social entrepreneurship supporting projects like

- **eBay for Change**,³⁸ - collaboration aiming to provide international visibility to small businesses that reinvest their profits into their communities. This initiative aimed to catalyse significant social and environmental impact, whether within the UK or abroad;
- **Buy Social Corporate Challenge**³⁹ - a consortium of prominent businesses striving to collectively allocate £1 billion in procurement spending to social enterprises. The initiatives launched with objectives to facilitate large businesses in collaborating with diverse and innovative suppliers, and supports high-performing social enterprise suppliers in expanding their revenues and impact by leveraging the purchasing power of corporate entities.

This allows us to conclude that SEUK puts the main focus in the majority of their initiatives in **creating opportunities for social entrepreneurs to enter new markets**, attract new clients, and build a more efficient supply chain. Such efforts also contribute to building a vibrant network of social entrepreneurs.

³⁷ <https://www.futureeconomyalliance.co.uk/about-us>

³⁸ <https://pages.ebay.co.uk/ebay-for-change/>

³⁹ <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/get-involved/social-procurement/buy-social-corporate-challenge/>

Best Practices of International SE Networks

DIESIS Network

Founded in 1997, the Diesis Network has grown into one of the largest worldwide networks dedicated to promoting the development of the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social innovation. The network works for developing a collective commitment of all stakeholders and a collaborative approach, so that brings together more than 50 member organisations in over 25 countries that collectively represent over 90,000 organisations and support 1.2 million jobs through key national federations and support networks.⁴⁰

DIESIS Network works on delivering knowledge-based activities including training, project design, consultancy, advisory services, technical assistance and research.

Among the projects and initiatives devoted to knowledge-creating and sharing there are the following:

- **Social Entrepreneurship Academy** project aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of adult educators and practitioners in the field of migrants inclusion on Social Entrepreneurship (SE).⁴¹
- **The baSE** (Blueprint for advanced skills & training in the social economy) project is a Blueprint Alliances selected by the EU Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme aimed at enabling the knowledge share among higher education, vocational education and training with social economy actors who contribute to the ecosystemic growth. The project addresses skills mismatches and provide new skills with regard to occupational profiles in the SE sector.⁴²
- **Planning Seeds** project aims to create a shared European **methodological framework and a Handbook for the creation and management of Solidarity Economy Districts**, involving young adults (18 - 30) with fewer opportunities and the elderly population (65+) in their development and promotion.⁴³
- **PEACE'22** project aims at empowering Lithuanian and European organisations working with migrants to build their capacity to **promote social inclusion and integration in the labour market**. The project also foresees the research component and the exchange activities.⁴⁴
- **DIGITS** project aims to improve the digital inclusion of third-country national (TCN) women through practical **tools and tailored educational interventions** that will contribute to a better quality of life for them.⁴⁵

In terms of increasing social economy and social entrepreneurship visibility, DIESIS Networks implemented dozens of projects and initiatives in this field, especially the following ones:

⁴⁰ <https://www.diesis.coop/>

⁴¹ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/seaproject/>

⁴² <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/base/>

⁴³ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/planning-seeds/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/peace22/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/digits/>. More information about knowledge-based projects led by DIESIS Network can be found here <https://www.diesis.coop/what-we-do/>

- **Buying for Social Impact (BSI)** - a project commissioned by DG GROW and EASME to promote the use of social considerations in public procurement procedures.⁴⁶
- **BUYSOCIAL B2B** project aimed improving the competitiveness and commercial capacity of the social enterprises.⁴⁷
- **MEDICI: Mapping Digital Inclusion** - a two year European projects aimed to develop and disseminate the existing best practices of integrating vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into Digital Society.⁴⁸

DIESIS Network is a key player in promoting social economy and social entrepreneurship on the international level, including the regions outside Europe targeting Lebanon, Honduras, Colombia, Jordan and other countries.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/bsi-buying-for-social-impact-2/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/bfse-b2b/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.diesis.coop/projects/medici-2/>

⁴⁹ See <https://www.diesis.coop/what-we-do/>

ENSIE Network

The European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE) was formally established in 2001 in Belgium to foster cooperation between national networks of work integration social enterprises across the European Union.

Among the ENSIE's objectives, there are

- To strengthen the influence of actors in the field of social enterprises for work integration through cooperation between member organisations.
- To encourage cooperation and partnerships by promoting good practice, research and innovative applications.
- To facilitate the exchange of information between member organisations on legislative issues at the national and local policy levels.⁵⁰

To promote and advocate the WISE as an effective practice of social and economic integration of vulnerable groups, ENSIE is active in **making policy and position papers and recommendations** to international organisations and governmental bodies. Among those, there are the following ones:

- **WISEs contribution & ENSIE recommendations for the UN Special Rapporteur** on extreme poverty and human rights in the framework of the visit to the EU where ENSIE clearly demonstrates the contribution of work integrating social enterprises to the implementation of the 15 out of 20 European Pillar of Social Rights principles.⁵¹
- **Position Paper** of ENSIE for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on public procurement and its evaluation from the perspective of WISEs development across the EU member states.⁵²
- **RREUSE & ENSIE Position on the 2022 Ukraine Refugee Crisis** highlighting that WISEs should be recognised in their role as providers of measures aimed at the integration of refugees, overall granting access to the job market, housing, and educational opportunities, upskilling and reskilling, among others and that the EU's need to promote long-term and sustainable solutions to integrate refugees in European society.⁵³

ENSIE also runs an **annual study "Impact-WISEs"** to evaluate the impact of WISEs on the economy and workers in integration. "Impact-WISEs" tool is made by quantitative indicators related to WISEs identification, economic data, human resources, integration pathway, analysis of customers, sectors of activity and their contributions to the United Nations 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ <http://www.ensie.org/>

⁵¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/VisitEU/ENSIE.pdf>

⁵² https://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/04_02_ensie_et_mp_en.pdf

⁵³ <https://rreuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/position-paper-ukraine-rreuse-ensie.pdf>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ensie.org/wises-data/impact-wises>

EUCLID Network

Euclid Network is internationally recognized as a **key sectoral representative of social enterprise**⁵⁵. EN has a policy presence at EU level, being a Member of various advisory groups such as the GECES and the Structural Dialogue Group, and at international level, being a Member of the UN Taskforce on Social and Solidarity Economy and WEF COVID Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs.

To amplify the voice of social entrepreneurs in the public discourse, the Euclid Network regularly writes **public position papers**:

2015 – [Open Memo to the EU Social Business Expert Group](#)

2019 – Open letter to the European Parliament – [Enhance Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in Europe](#)

2019 – [Joint Statement on the European Green Deal](#)

2020 – Open letter to the European Commission and European Council – [Call for specific measures to support social enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

2020 – [EN assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the social enterprise sector](#)

2020 – [EU recognition of social and proximity economy as key industrial ecosystem in Europe](#)

2021 – [EN's Position Paper on the European Action Plan for Social Economy](#)

2023 – [Policy Statement: Women in Social Enterprise](#)

2023 - Policy statement on [Youth in Social Enterprise](#)

2023 - [EN's Position On The UN Resolution On The Role Of The Social And Solidarity Economy For Achieving The SDGs](#)

In 2022 EN also prepared a **Compendium of good policy practices** that represents the collective work of its members who have highlighted several policies and practices from their countries that they believe could be replicated in other areas to support social enterprises and further enable them to make a positive impact.⁵⁶

In 2020 Euclid Network presented its **Manifesto**⁵⁷ underlying the crucial role of social enterprises in the post-COVID-19 economy. The manifesto presents 15 concrete policy recommendations aimed at boosting social enterprises and their role in a green and just economic recovery across Europe.

The EN regularly prepares **newsletters for members** that always include news from the policy sector and other social business-supporting initiatives.

One of the flagship EN projects is the **ESEM**⁵⁸ - the leading research initiative in the field of SE which is the point of reference for other SE organizations in Europe.

⁵⁵ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/>

⁵⁶ <https://knowledgecentre.euclidnetwork.eu/2022/11/24/compendium-of-good-policy-practices-2022/>

⁵⁷ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/en-manifesto-nov-2020.pdf>

⁵⁸ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/european-social-enterprise-monitor-esem/>

There is also an initiative to have a **quarterly meeting** among the EN members working in the policy-making field for regular updates and designing new initiatives.

To raise awareness raising about SE and its, players the network implements the following initiatives and campaigns:

- EN is among the Key partners of the **Buy Social Europe B2B** initiative aiming at promoting social procurement – buying products and services from social enterprises that put impact first.⁵⁹
- EN launched the **Top 100 Women in Social Enterprise** initiative to celebrate women in the social enterprise sector, spotlighting their impact journey and achievements, connecting them to learn from and inspire each other.⁶⁰
- Euclid Network thrives on welcoming new members and learning from a constant exchange of ideas, best practices and ongoing projects. EN has found that **introductory interviews** are a great way to give a sneak peak on the work of the new members and allow the rest of the members, as well as friends of the Network, to get acquainted with the new change-makers joining the network.⁶¹
- **Social Economy Podcast** – the podcast that bursts the bubble of EU jargon and brings the developments in European social entrepreneurship.⁶²

⁵⁹ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/buy-social-europe-b2b/>

⁶⁰ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/euclid-network-top-100-women-in-social-enterprise/>

⁶¹ <https://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/new-member-interview/>

⁶² <https://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/the-social-economist-podcast/>

SOCIAL ECONOMY EUROPE Network

Social Economy Europe serves as the **reference point for the social economy at the European level**. It stands as a strategic partner to European institutions, taking the lead on shaping EU policies related to the social economy. Established in November 2000 under the name of CEP-CMAF (the European Standing Conference of Cooperatives, Mutuals, Associations, and Foundations), the organization was founded with the aim of fostering a lasting dialogue between the social economy sector and European institutions. Undergoing a name change in 2008, CEP-CMAF officially transitioned to become Social Economy Europe.⁶³

SEE is a network of SE umbrella organizations across Europe. SEE is engaging its members for ongoing work with the European Commission, European Parliament and other EU institutions when preparing analytical papers, policy recommendations, etc.

Since its foundation, Social Economy Europe has been the secretariat of the European Parliament's Social Economy Intergroup.

SEE is active in making an **EU level policies recommendation**. SEE uses a **co-construction approach when drafting policy documents or making recommendations** to the EC or the EP. Among the latter policy documents/recommendations, there are

- **SEE analysis of the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions** (in 2022, in 2023)⁶⁴
- **SEE Policy Paper: Co-designing the Action Plan for the Social Economy**.⁶⁵

SEE also implements the social economy projects with the stakeholders from the European Commission. Among those there are:

- **Buying for Social Impact** - a project commissioned by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) and the European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) to promote the use of social considerations in public procurement procedures. The project covered 15 Member States: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden

The BSI Team consists of a network of National Public Procurement and Social Economy experts. The Team was coordinated by a Consortium led by the European Association for Information on Local Development (AEIDL), the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES), DIESIS

⁶³ <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/2023/07/12/see-analysis-of-the-council-recommendation-on-developing-social-economy-framework-conditions/>

⁶⁵ https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SEE_Policy-Paper_SE-ACTION-PLAN_2021_EN.pdf

COOP, Social Economy Europe (SEE) and the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE).⁶⁶

- **#WeBuySocialEU** The project is about collecting good practices and raising awareness on socially responsible public procurement.

Among the partners there are the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) and the and the European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) collected good practices on Socially Responsible Public Procurement (SRPP). The main goal of this project, implemented by ICLEI, AEIDL and Social Economy Europe (SEE) as a subcontractor.

The aim of the #WeBuySocial EU project is to promote the use of social considerations in public procurement the EU through the opportunities provided by the existing legal framework after the transposition of the Directive 2014/24/EU. The project also seeks to develop the access of social economy enterprises to public markets.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/our-work/projects/>

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

Advocacy Strategy Development Recommendations

Implementing research and mapping projects

Each advocacy initiative must be data-driven, so organisations doing advocacy should also implement research initiatives to generate evidence and data on the impact of social entrepreneurship. In practice, it could be done through

- Implementing **international research projects**, like ESEM with country-specific questions and country reports
- Conduct **national mapping research and data-collecting projects** to use them when making public statements or in communication with government stakeholders

Engagement with the SE community

Each advocacy initiative needs social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders working in the field. As the main beneficiaries of potential social entrepreneurship law, it is of high importance that social entrepreneurs are fully engaged in the process. For this purpose, it will be beneficial to

- **Discuss** the SE policy questions during the network meetings **with SEs or member organisations** through regular or occasional meetings, open events, roundtables, etc.
- Conduct a local **mapping of SE supporting organisations and other stakeholders** to get their opinions on SE policy development and issues in their daily work with SEs. It is important not to ignore some of them.

Engagement with government

- It is of high importance to make a **stakeholder analysis** and identify the most important and influential from the side of government. This will allow us to define the further strategy of engagement with them, depending on their passion for SE
- It is necessary **to have politicians passionate about social entrepreneurship** and then **communicate** with them regularly and **engage** them in all possible processes (inviting them for high-level events, putting them as partners in events and initiatives, asking them to be key-note speakers, asking them to write forewords for publications, etc.)
- Establish **regular communication** with the governmental stakeholders (newsletters/digests, recommendations, evaluation, research outcomes, etc.)

There were a couple of organisations involved in this research communicating about the effectiveness of raising awareness about the social entrepreneurship among politicians during the pre-election periods whether on the national level or the municipal ones. This is a good period to open up the topic of SE especially to those politicians not familiar with the concept or its practical implementation

Awareness raising

Advocacy is not only about approaching government but also about raising awareness activities to make social entrepreneurship visible. In this regard, advocacy organisations should:

- Develop and implement public **awareness campaigns** to educate the general public, media, and key stakeholders **about social entrepreneurship** (Digital campaigns, podcasts, series of publications. etc.)
- **Raise awareness** about **social entrepreneurs** and their impact (awards, special media campaigns to promote SE cases, storytelling, digital campaigns in social media to promote SE cases in a storytelling manner, series of video or other promotional content, creating the database or mapping, etc.)
- **Raise awareness about LISVA** as a key player in the field of SE advocacy (attending events, organizing conferences and forums, forming a kind of consortium for SE advocacy and being a leader of that, making regular public statements, recommendations, and comments)

Provide business support

- In order to get strong support from the SE players, we have to ensure the accessibility of **business support services** (incubation/acceleration programs, mentorship & consultancy, tailored support) provided by ourselves or in partnership with other providers
- Working on **increasing the access to financing for SEs** through attracting donors and impact investors, designing special funding opportunities (e.g. social procurement on the municipal level) by ourselves or in partnership with other organisations
- **Fostering networking** (designing curricula for workshops, webinars, informal meetings, study tours, exchange programs, etc.)

Other general recommendations

- **Using proper wording and terms**

When talking about social entrepreneurship we may use different words, terms or even concepts. This can be also noticed from the comparative analysis of social entrepreneurship policy documents of different European countries. Different countries use different terms - social economy, social and solidarity economy, social economy entrepreneurship, sharing economy and so on. In this regard the recommendation is to use the proper and understandable terms for the concrete country not to confuse the stakeholders with the new terms and concepts.

- **Showcasing the real results**

In order to get a positive attitude and support and make the social entrepreneurship attractive to the policy makers or from the government representatives, the advocacy-making organisation should use a showcase approach. This is about demonstration of the positive effects and real results of the social entrepreneurship in making social or/and environmental impact.

- **Media Engagement**

Developing a media engagement strategy is necessary to enhance visibility and generate positive media coverage for social entrepreneurship. Engage with journalists, pitch stories, write op-eds, and provide expert commentary on social entrepreneurship-related topics to raise awareness and shape public discourse.

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