

GRESODI

Policy recommendations

White Paper



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1.

Foreword



1.1 Welcome

The GRESODI project - standing for Green, Social, and Digital transition via local impact ventures - embodies a collaborative European initiative aimed at fostering sustainable, socially responsible, and digitally advanced entrepreneurship ecosystems. In a rapidly evolving global landscape, social enterprises play an increasingly vital role in addressing pressing societal and economic challenges, particularly in underserved regions.

This White Paper serves as a testament to the dedication and expertise of a broad network of stakeholders, including policymakers, social entrepreneurs, researchers, and industry experts, who have worked together to analyse, refine, and strengthen the social enterprise sector across Hungary, Austria, and Spain. By synthesizing key insights from extensive research, practical incubation experiences, and in-depth stakeholder consultations, this document highlights the strategic pathways necessary to ensure the long-term viability and impact of social enterprises in Europe.

The GRESODI initiative has created a structured and data-driven approach to understanding and addressing the fundamental barriers faced by social enterprises, particularly in the realms of financial accessibility, regulatory support, and market integration. Through this White Paper, we aim to empower decision-makers with actionable recommendations that can translate into meaningful policy interventions, fostering a resilient and inclusive entrepreneurial environment.

1.2 Purpose and role of the White Paper

This White Paper is designed as a comprehensive resource to consolidate the results of the GRESODI project. It provides a structured overview of the challenges, opportunities and best practices shaping social enterprise ecosystems in the participating regions. The document serves three primary purposes:

1. **Inform policy development:** By providing evidence-based insights and targeted policy recommendations, this White Paper seeks to support policymakers in designing and implementing strategies that foster an enabling environment for social enterprises. It advocates for legislative clarity, improved funding mechanisms, and greater institutional support.
2. **Facilitate stakeholder engagement:** Social enterprises thrive within well-connected ecosystems that include governmental agencies, private sector actors, academic institutions, and local communities. This document aims to strengthen cross-sector collaboration by offering a shared knowledge base and strategic direction for stakeholders committed to advancing social entrepreneurship.
3. **Enhance the sustainability and scalability of social enterprises:** By highlighting key lessons learned from the GRESODI incubation program, including the Impact Lab and Bootcamp initiatives, this White Paper provides practical guidance for existing and aspiring social entrepreneurs. It underscores the importance of capacity-building, digital transformation, and sustainable financing as critical pillars of long-term success.

The recommendations presented in this White Paper are built upon extensive research and stakeholder dialogue, ensuring their relevance and applicability in diverse socio-economic contexts. By aligning policies with the real-world needs of social enterprises, we can unlock their full potential as drivers of economic resilience, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

2.

Executive summary



The GRESODI Project — “Green, Social and Digital transition through local impact ventures” — represents a joint European effort to strengthen the ecosystem of social enterprises and innovation across Hungary, Austria and Spain. Its core ambition is to enable local impact ventures to act as drivers of the twin transition, integrating environmental sustainability and digital transformation with strong social value creation.

The project combined research, capacity-building and policy design. Through a transnational ecosystem assessment, impact labs and bootcamps, and policy dialogues involving practitioners and decision-makers, GRESODI identified the structural barriers, strengths, and innovation potentials that define the social economy in each partner country. The process culminated in this White Paper, which provides strategic policy recommendations for improving coordination, visibility and support to social enterprises as key actors of inclusive and sustainable growth.

Key findings

Across all three countries, the assessment revealed both diversity and convergence in the development of the social enterprise (SE) sector:

- Austria demonstrates a mature ecosystem with strong institutional support, stable financing, and an increasing number of green and social impact start-ups, especially in Styria.
- Spain, particularly Catalonia, shows high entrepreneurial dynamism and progress in digitalization, yet still faces urban–rural disparities and gender gaps.
- Hungary presents a resilient but fragmented landscape: many social enterprises operate successfully at local level despite the absence of a national strategy, unified legal framework or targeted funding schemes.

Common challenges include:

- Lack of clear policy responsibility and fragmented coordination among ministries and agencies;
- Insufficient access to finance, limited impact-investment and blended-finance opportunities;
- Weak visibility and recognition of social enterprises in mainstream economic and innovation policies;
- Limited data and impact measurement, preventing evidence-based decision-making;
- Skills and digital gaps, particularly affecting small and rural social enterprises.

Yet, the project also highlighted key opportunities:

- Rising awareness among private companies and municipalities seeking long-term partnerships with SEs;
- The growing importance of ESG, green transition, and local employment as areas where SEs can create tangible value;
- The potential of digital tools to bridge social and geographical divides, if coupled with training and infrastructure support.

Vision and direction

GRESODI envisions a cohesive European ecosystem where social enterprises are recognized as strategic partners in achieving the twin transition and the EU Green Deal objectives. This requires building enabling environments that connect policy, finance, education and community innovation.

The project proposes a multi-level approach:

1. National level – establish dedicated policy ownership, legal recognition and funding frameworks.
2. Regional and local level – empower SE hubs, networks and municipalities to integrate SEs into local development and circular-economy strategies.
3. Transnational level – strengthen cooperation between EU member states through shared learning, joint funding, and interoperable data systems.

Policy recommendations at a glance

The White Paper identifies eight key policy areas:

1. Strategic approach, regulation and coordination – create a coherent policy framework and appoint dedicated SE focal points.
2. Financial support and incentives – ensure tailored funding, tax benefits and blended-finance instruments for SEs.
3. Education, training and knowledge sharing – integrate SE learning into higher and adult education, and promote peer-to-peer exchange.
4. Digitalization and access to digital tools – improve digital literacy, infrastructure and platform access for SEs, especially in rural areas.
5. Visibility and market integration – build national SE registries, branding and marketplace platforms.
6. Labelling and quality management – introduce voluntary certification and quality standards for SEs.
7. Impact measurement and policy effectiveness – adopt harmonized frameworks (e.g. Theory of Change and Social Impact Assessment) for monitoring results.
8. Green and sustainable transition – incentivize SEs to embed sustainability and circular-economy models into their operations.

Conclusion

GRESODI confirms that social enterprises are vital agents of transition — combining entrepreneurial innovation with social inclusion, environmental responsibility and local resilience. To fully unlock their potential, policymakers must move from project-based support to systemic integration, where social enterprises become visible, credible and investable actors within national and EU strategies.

This White Paper thus serves as both a strategic roadmap and a call to action: to align policies, mobilize resources, and co-create sustainable ecosystems where people, planet and prosperity reinforce each other.

3.

Introduction



3.1 Overview of the GRESODI project

The GRESODI project represents a strategic initiative aimed at fostering a more sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem across Europe. The project focuses on enabling social enterprises in Austria, Hungary, Spain to thrive by integrating green and digital innovations while addressing pressing socio-economic challenges. Through structured incubation programs (selected social enterprises receive €1,000 per project in the form of green and digital vouchers, as well as mentoring services), stakeholder engagement and targeted policy recommendations, GRESODI provides the necessary tools and frameworks to strengthen social enterprises in selected areas of Austria, Hungary and Spain.

By leveraging data-driven insights, cross-sector collaboration, and hands-on experimentation, GRESODI identifies key barriers to social enterprise growth and formulates strategies to overcome them. The project serves as a catalyst for social innovation, supporting the transition towards a more resilient and equitable economic landscape.

3.2. Importance and role of social enterprises

Social enterprises play a crucial role in addressing societal challenges by bridging the gap between economic sustainability and social impact. Unlike traditional businesses, social enterprises prioritize the well-being of communities, environmental sustainability, and inclusive growth while maintaining financial viability.

Their role is particularly significant in regions facing economic disparities, where they contribute to job creation, local development, and social cohesion. By focusing on innovative business models that incorporate green and digital solutions, social enterprises drive systemic change and foster more resilient economies.

Moreover, the recognition and support of social enterprises within policy frameworks are essential for scaling their impact. Ensuring financial incentives, regulatory clarity, and access to markets allows these enterprises to reach their full potential, creating sustainable solutions to complex social issues. The GRESODI project highlights the transformative power of social enterprises, advocating for their integration into broader economic strategies to achieve long-term sustainability and social progress.

4.

Legal, regulatory, and financial environment

4.1 Legal frameworks

Legal definitions and frameworks for social enterprises in each country

4.1.1. AUSTRIA

The legal landscape for social enterprises in Austria remains fragmented, with no dedicated **legally binding legal form** that specifically defines or governs social entrepreneurship. While various organizational structures can accommodate social enterprises, these entities operate under different legal forms that influence their access to funding, regulatory obligations, and operational flexibility. The **social economy**, by contrast, has a designated legal form in Austria, primarily structured around the **gemeinnützige GmbH (gGmbH)**, which applies to non-profit organizations. However, social enterprises differ in that they can be **profit-oriented**, focusing on generating financial sustainability while pursuing a social mission.

Key Legal Forms Relevant to Social Enterprises in Austria

- **Associations (Vereine)**

Associations are one of the most common legal forms used by organizations engaging in social or community-driven initiatives. They are governed by the **Austrian Associations Act (Vereinsgesetz 2002)** and are legally required to be non-profit in nature. This means they cannot distribute profits among members but must reinvest all surplus into their social objectives. While associations play an important role in the Austrian social economy, they **do not align with the social enterprise model**, which often seeks financial self-sufficiency through commercial activities.

- **Non-Profit Limited Liability Company (gemeinnützige GmbH - gGmbH)**

The **gGmbH** is a widely used legal form in Austria's **social economy** and is **explicitly designed for non-profit purposes**. Entities registered under this structure must reinvest profits entirely into their social mission and generally **depend on subsidies** rather than self-sustaining revenue models. This contrasts with social enterprises, which may aim to generate independent income streams to sustain their operations.

- **Cooperatives (Genossenschaften)**

Social enterprises can also take the form of **cooperatives**, which are governed by the **Cooperative Act (Genossenschaftsgesetz, GenG)**. Cooperatives emphasize democratic governance, with decision-making power distributed among members. While some cooperatives focus on social impact, **there is no distinct legal status for social enterprises within Austrian cooperative law.**

- **Commercial Enterprises with a Social Mission**
Social enterprises in Austria can also take on **commercial legal forms**, such as **GmbH (Limited Liability Company)** or **AG (Stock Corporation)**, as long as they integrate a **strong social mission** into their business models. These organizations do not benefit from the tax exemptions and public funding available to non-profits, making access to financing more challenging.

- **Verified Social Enterprise (VSE) – A Voluntary Certification**

Although Austria lacks a **specific legal form** for social enterprises, the **Verified Social Enterprise (VSE) label**^[1] provides an official recognition framework for businesses that prioritize social impact.

Legal Gaps and Challenges

Despite the presence of various legal structures that social enterprises can adopt, Austria still lacks:

A dedicated legal form or supplement for social enterprises, creating ambiguity in defining their rights and obligations.

Consistent tax benefits for social enterprises that do not qualify as non-profits (gGmbHs).

Clear differentiation between social enterprises and traditional for-profit businesses in regulatory and financial policies.

Without legal clarity, Austrian social enterprises **navigate a complex regulatory environment**, relying on flexible legal structures while advocating for a more supportive policy framework.

^[1] The **VSE label**, launched by the **Austrian Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour** and managed by **Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws)**, is a **voluntary certification** rather than a legal requirement. It is awarded to enterprises that meet the following criteria:

Primary social or ecological objective – The enterprise must demonstrate that social or environmental impact is at the core of its mission.

Business model with economic viability – The organization must operate on a sustainable financial model, proving that it can generate revenue to support its social goals.

Reinvestment of profits – While the enterprise can be profit-oriented, it must allocate a significant portion of its surplus to advancing its social mission.

By obtaining the VSE label, social enterprises can enhance their credibility, improve access to financing, and gain visibility within the Austrian **social impact ecosystem**. However, since this label is not legally binding, enterprises still face challenges in securing long-term regulatory and financial support.

4.1.2. HUNGARY

Hungary's legal framework for social enterprises is fragmented, as there is no single legal definition or designation for these entities. Instead, social enterprises operate under various legal structures, including associations (**egyesület**), foundations (**alapítvány**), social cooperatives (**szociális szövetkezet**), and non-profit companies (**közhasznú nonprofit kft.**). These structures must comply with the **Hungarian Civil Code (Act V of 2013)** and specific legislation governing their respective forms.

The **Act X of 2006 on Cooperatives** provides the main legal framework for social cooperatives, which aim to enhance employment and social integration for disadvantaged groups. Social cooperatives benefit from some tax exemptions and preferential financing options but still face challenges in terms of scaling and sustainability.

In addition, **Act CLXXV of 2011 on Nonprofit Organizations** regulates associations and foundations, which can operate as social enterprises if they engage in revenue-generating activities aligned with their social mission. However, these entities must comply with strict financial reporting and operational requirements.

Despite these existing legal structures, Hungary lacks a dedicated **Social Enterprise Law**, which creates regulatory uncertainty and limits access to tailored financial and fiscal incentives. The absence of a unified framework has led to inconsistent interpretations of what constitutes a social enterprise, making it difficult for organizations to access funding, legal benefits, and governmental support.

4.1.3. SPAIN

The Social Economy (SE) in Spain is legally defined by [the Law 5/2011 on Social Economy](#). According to Article 2, Social Economy refers to *"the set of economic and business activities carried out in the private sector by entities that, in accordance with the principles set out in Article 4, pursue either the collective interest of their members, the general economic or social interest, or both."*

The law (article 4) establishes the fundamental principles governing Social Economy entities:

- Primacy of people and social purpose over capital in decision-making.
- Democratic and participatory management by members or partners.
- Distribution of benefits based on work contribution and/or reinvestment in the organization.
- Commitment to local development, social cohesion, and sustainability.
- Independence from public authorities.

In article 5 the law classifies the entities that are considered social economy:

- Cooperatives
- Worker-owned companies
- Mutual societies
- Work integration social enterprises
- Special employment centers of social initiative
- Associations and foundations engaged in economic activities
- Entities of the Third Sector of Social Action

In addition to the national framework, has exclusive competence over the promotion and regulation of the Social Economy, as established in [Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya](#) (art 124.4).

Catalonia has a specific legal framework for cooperatives, regulated [Llei 12/2015, del 9 de juliol, de cooperatives](#). This law modernizes cooperative governance, granting greater flexibility in decision-making and economic management while reinforcing democratic participation and social purpose. It establishes different types of cooperatives, including worker, consumer, housing, and service cooperatives, and defines their legal framework, fiscal benefits, and requirements for registration and operation. Additionally, it introduces measures to support cooperative entrepreneurship and ensures their alignment with social, economic, and territorial development in Catalonia.

A significant upcoming regulation is the [Social and Solidarity Economy Law of Catalonia](#), which will establish a dedicated legal framework for the sector in the region. This pioneering law, already approved as a draft by the Government of Catalonia, will be the first of its kind in Spain. It aims to provide a more precise and comprehensive recognition of the Social Economy, enhancing policies that support its growth and ensuring the consolidation of this economic model as a key driver of social and sustainable development.

4.2 Regulatory environment

Analysis of regulatory environments affecting social enterprises in each country.

4.2.1. AUSTRIA

Austria lacks a coherent regulatory framework for social enterprises, leading to ambiguities in legal classification, taxation, and public support. While social enterprises operate with a fully entrepreneurial approach, assuming a trade license and focusing on solving societal or ecological challenges, they receive no formal recognition in national policies. This results in misalignment between financial incentives, taxation, and operational realities, often forcing social enterprises to combine legal forms (e.g., associations + GmbH) to navigate existing regulations.

Business Registration and Legal Complexity

Social enterprises often mix association (Verein) and GmbH structures to balance fundraising opportunities and commercial activity. While this offers flexibility, it increases administrative complexity and legal uncertainty. The lack of a dedicated legal form makes it difficult to access tailored financial incentives.

Taxation and Financial Incentives

Unlike non-profit oriented legal forms (Verein, gGmbH), social enterprises do not benefit from tax exemptions. The Verified Social Enterprise (VSE) label, managed by Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws), has the potential to introduce reductions in labor costs, corporate tax, and VAT, but these measures remain non-binding.

Public Procurement and Market Access

Although Austria's Public Procurement Law allows social and environmental considerations, social enterprises face barriers in competing for contracts due to financial constraints and bureaucratic complexity. There are no preferential mechanisms to facilitate their market access.

Policy Support and Ecosystem Development

Austria has a strong ecosystem led by SENA (Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria), which actively promotes policy recommendations. However, its role is purely advisory, with limited impact on legislation. While the matter of Social Entrepreneurship increasingly takes a grip in economic strategies of national ministries and some federal states, it has yet very limited recognition in the political landscape.

Conclusion

The **absence of national-level legal provisions** results in constant **misunderstandings between social enterprises and traditional social economy actors**. Without **clear regulatory recognition, tax incentives, and structured public procurement policies**, social enterprises remain **at a disadvantage** compared to both **non-profits and traditional businesses**. Future reforms should focus on:

1. **Legal recognition** of social enterprises as a distinct category.
2. **Tax incentives** aligned with their social impact.
3. **Improved access to public procurement**.
4. **Stronger government coordination** to harmonize policies.

Until these changes are implemented, social enterprises will continue to **operate in a regulatory gray zone**, limiting their potential to drive **economic and social innovation**.

4.2.2. HUNGARY

Hungary's regulatory environment for social enterprises remains underdeveloped and fragmented. While several national and EU-funded initiatives support the sector, there is no centralized governmental body overseeing social enterprises. This lack of coordination results in overlapping responsibilities and limited policy continuity.

Some of the key regulatory issues facing social enterprises in Hungary include:

- **Lack of a dedicated regulatory authority:** Unlike in some European countries where social enterprises are governed by a dedicated ministry or agency, in Hungary, oversight is divided among multiple government bodies, leading to inefficiencies and inconsistent policy implementation.
- **Challenges in public procurement:** Although the **Public Procurement Act (Act CXLIII of 2015)** allows for social considerations in awarding contracts, in practice, social enterprises face barriers in competing with traditional businesses due to bureaucratic and financial constraints.
- **Limited fiscal incentives:** While some tax relief measures exist for certain nonprofit entities, Hungary lacks a comprehensive tax policy that supports social enterprises. The current corporate tax system does not provide significant incentives for businesses to collaborate with or invest in social enterprises.
- **Policy fragmentation:** Social enterprises benefit from various **EU-funded programs** under Hungary's **Széchenyi 2020 Development Program, GINOP (Economic Development and Innovation Operational Program) and KAP (Common Agricultural Policy)**, but these initiatives are often short-term and project-based rather than forming part of a long-term, structured policy strategy.

To address these challenges, stakeholders have called for the development of a **national social economy strategy**, similar to models in Slovakia or France, where social enterprises receive greater legal clarity, financial incentives, and government-backed support structures.

4.2.3. SPAIN

Institutional and policy framework

Spanish level: In the national level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (MITES) is the main governmental body responsible for regulating and promoting the Social Economy. Key policies include: [Spanish Strategy for Social Economy 2023-2027](#), a national policy plan that sets objectives for strengthening the sector, promoting job creation, and fostering innovation in Social Economy enterprises. Also, [Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia \(PRTR\)](#), an EU-funded economic recovery plan that includes specific measures to finance and promote Social Economy entities across Spain.

Catalonian level: In Catalonia, the [Department of Business and Labour](#) (Generalitat de Catalunya) is the main public body responsible for Social Economy and cooperative policies. It provides financial support, advisory services, and training programs for Social Economy entities.. This Department promotes the [Program on Social Economy](#), a government initiative aimed at positioning SE as a key player in building a more social, democratic and inclusive society economic model in

Catalunya. It is also important to make reference to the [Ateneus Cooperatius network](#) which is one of the most innovative policies in Spain that combines public funding with private management promoting SE in Catalunya.

The private management is carried out by a group of Social Economy enterprises from each territory, ensuring that the local context and needs are taken into account. Currently, there are 14 Ateneus Cooperatius operating in Catalonia, providing training, networking, and business support to cooperatives and Social Economy enterprises.

Tax benefits: Social Economy entities in Spain and Catalonia benefit from various tax advantages designed to support their sustainability and encourage reinvestment in social projects. Cooperatives enjoy a reduced corporate tax rate of 20% instead of the general 25%, provided they meet specific legal requirements. Additionally, they are exempt from certain taxes, such as the Property Transfer Tax and Stamp Duty (Impost de Transmissions Patrimonials i Actes Jurídics Documentats, ITP-AJD).

Beyond cooperatives, public interest associations and foundations benefit from additional tax incentives under the sponsorship and patronage regime, which promotes financial contributions from individuals and businesses to support social and community-based initiatives.

4.3 Financial environment

Financial opportunities and challenges for social enterprises in each country.

4.3.1. AUSTRIA

Austria offers various funding instruments for impact-driven businesses, including grants, impact investment, social bonds, and crowdfunding options. However, there is no unified national funding strategy for social enterprises, and most financial initiatives do not specifically assess social or ecological impact. Social enterprises often compete with traditional businesses for funding, with no mandatory regulations or labeling that prioritize impact startups.

Grants and Public Funding

Several national and regional grants support impact startups, although they are not exclusively designated for social enterprises:

- AWS Innovative Solutions – A national grant scheme, tailored for impact-driven startups, provides financial support for innovation.

- FFG (Austrian Research Promotion Agency) Grants – Public research grants consider social and environmental impact as an evaluation criterion, increasing the chances of funding success, particularly for large companies. Starting in autumn 2025, several calls provide improved funding conditions dedicated to social business and social innovation.
- Local Initiatives – Until the year 2025, the City of Graz supported social businesses through crowdfunding programs, while Vienna offers unspecified funding opportunities (requiring further research).

Impact Investment and Private Financing

Austria's impact investment ecosystem remains limited but growing, with a few key players:

- Impact Hub Investments (currently only in Tirol) provide early-stage funding for impact startups.
- MARC program – An investment readiness initiative by Erste Bank & Impact Hub Vienna, focusing on social enterprises with scalable impact models.
- Private Impact Investors – Key figures in Austria's impact investing scene include a handful dedicated impact investors of who actively invest in social enterprises.
- Erste Social Finance offers support and favourable loan conditions with the financial instrument of "quasi equity".

Social Impact Bonds and Alternative Financing

Austria has experimented with Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), an innovative funding mechanism where investors fund social initiatives with returns linked to performance:

- Sozialministerium Social Impact Bond – Focuses on employment integration projects, aligning financial returns with social outcomes
<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Soziale-Themen/Soziale-Innovation/Social-Impact-Bond.html>.

Additionally, equity-based crowdfunding offers another financing channel:

- Green Rocket – A crowd-investing platform supporting impact startups and scale-ups, enabling equity-based fundraising.

Conclusion

Austria provides **diverse funding options** for impact-driven businesses, but **most initiatives do not explicitly assess or regulate the impact of startups**. To strengthen financial support for social enterprises, Austria should:

1. **Develop a dedicated funding strategy** for impact startups.
2. **Introduce mandatory impact assessment criteria** in public and private funding programs.
3. **Expand impact investing** beyond Tirol and Vienna.
4. **Strengthen alternative financing mechanisms**, such as **social impact bonds and equity-based crowdfunding**.

Without **structured financial incentives and clearer regulatory alignment**, social enterprises will continue to face challenges in securing **long-term financial sustainability**.

4.3.2. HUNGARY

Access to finance remains one of the most significant barriers for Hungarian social enterprises. Traditional banking institutions are often reluctant to finance social enterprises due to perceived risks, lack of collateral, and difficulty in assessing their financial viability.

Currently, Hungarian social enterprises rely on the following funding sources:

- **EU Structural and Investment Funds:** Programs such as **GINOP, KAP, VEKOP (Competitive Central Hungary Program)**, and the **Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, EASI Programmes** provide grants and financial instruments tailored for social innovation and enterprise development.
- **Impact investment and social finance:** Hungary's impact investment ecosystem is still in its infancy. Some initiatives, such as the **Impact Ventures Fund**, provide early-stage funding for social enterprises, but overall access to venture capital remains limited.
- **Public grants and subsidies:** Government-funded initiatives, such as the **Hungarian Development Bank (MFB)** and **Hungarian Charity Service Programs**, provide funding opportunities, but these are often short-term and project-based.
- **Crowdfunding and alternative financing:** Platforms like **AdjuKössze.hu**, Hungary's largest crowdfunding platform, offer social enterprises an alternative way to raise funds. However, crowdfunding remains underutilized due to low public awareness and regulatory barriers.
- **Cooperative financing:** Some social enterprises leverage cooperative models to pool resources and access shared funding mechanisms. However, due to regulatory limitations, cooperative financing has not reached its full potential in Hungary.

- **ERSTE Social Banking and Magnet Bank:** ERSTE Social Banking provides financial services and mentoring tailored for social enterprises, offering preferential loan conditions and professional support. Similarly, **Magnet Bank**, a community-focused bank in Hungary, supports social enterprises through impact-driven financial solutions and ethical banking practices.

Despite these funding opportunities, Hungarian social enterprises face challenges in achieving financial sustainability due to the dominance of grant-based financing. Long-term financial resilience requires more diverse funding mechanisms, including greater access to **blended finance, social bonds, and sustainable investment models**.

Conclusion

Hungary's social enterprise sector has significant potential to contribute to economic resilience, social inclusion, and sustainability. However, the lack of a unified legal framework, fragmented regulatory oversight, and limited financial support mechanisms continue to hinder growth.

To create a more enabling environment for social enterprises, Hungary must:

1. **Develop a national Social Enterprise Law** that provides clear legal recognition and tailored fiscal incentives.
2. **Establish a dedicated governmental body** to oversee policy coordination and implementation for social enterprises.
3. **Strengthen social enterprise access to finance**, including impact investment, tax relief programs, and alternative financing models.
4. **Enhance public-private collaboration** to integrate social enterprises into mainstream economic and development policies.
5. **Promote social enterprise visibility and knowledge-sharing**, fostering a culture of social innovation through education, media campaigns, and business networks.

By implementing these reforms, Hungary can create a more robust social entrepreneurship ecosystem that supports sustainable growth and social impact in the long term.

4.3.3. SPAIN

Social enterprises face unique financial opportunities and challenges as they navigate the balance between social impact and financial sustainability. Accessing the right funding sources is crucial for their long-term success. Financing for social enterprises can be categorized into public and private funding, each offering distinct advantages and difficulties.

Public funding

Public funding provides stability and legitimacy to social enterprises through grants, subsidies, and public tenders. In Catalonia, specific funding mechanisms support the social and solidarity economy (ESS), such as:

- Subvencions del programa Singulars (Catalonia) – Supports innovative social economy projects that drive economic transformation and job creation. Funding is aimed at promoting new business models, intercooperation between social economy entities, and scaling sustainable initiatives.
- Comunalitats – Aims to strengthen local social and solidarity economy networks by fostering community-based projects.
- Barcelona Activa – Instead of direct funding, Barcelona Activa offers free services to support the social economy sector, including business advisory, training programs, co-working spaces, and digital transformation support
- Enfortim - Focused on strengthening the cooperative sector, this program provides financial and technical support to help social economy entities consolidate, expand, or launch strategic projects.
- Ateneus Cooperatius – Publicly funded network in Catalonia that offers financial support, advisory services, and networking opportunities to social economy projects and cooperatives.

Despite their advantages, public funding presents challenges, including complex application procedures, strict eligibility criteria, and intensive reporting requirements. Additionally, many public funds are project-based and time-limited, making financial planning and long-term sustainability difficult. Social enterprises must diversify funding sources and complement public support with other financial strategies.

Private funding and own resources

Private funding provides flexibility and can be a key driver of innovation. Social enterprises can explore ethical banking or crowdfunding. Ethical finance institutions, such as Coop57, Triodos Bank, and Fiare, offer loans and investment opportunities aligned with social impact goals. While crowdfunding platforms enable enterprises to engage their communities and attract direct financial support from individuals, the amounts raised are often small or highly variable.

Beyond external private funding, social enterprises can leverage their own resources to ensure financial sustainability. This includes:

- Membership fees and cooperative capital contributions, which are essential for cooperatives and collective enterprises.
- Revenue from services or products, ensuring financial autonomy and reducing dependence on external funding.
- Reinvestment of surplus income to strengthen financial resilience and long-term growth.

The challenge with private and own-source funding lies in the need for a clear return on investment or a long-term sustainability plan, unlike public grants. Many social enterprises face barriers for ethical funding, and challenges in establishing stable revenue streams. Sustaining growth, managing cash flow effectively, and ensuring long-term financial resilience become even more complex in the face of market fluctuations and economic uncertainty.

5.

Scope and definitions



5.1 Defining the scope

Social enterprises occupy a unique position within the economic system, operating at the intersection of commercial activity and social impact. Unlike traditional businesses, which primarily seek financial returns, social enterprises prioritize addressing social and environmental challenges through sustainable business models. These enterprises reinvest their profits into achieving their mission, whether it be reducing economic inequality, fostering inclusive employment, or advancing environmental sustainability.

Social enterprises play a crucial role in modern economies by bridging the gap between public services and private-sector efficiency. They contribute to social cohesion, innovation, and local economic development, particularly in underserved communities. The GRESODI project acknowledges the evolving landscape of social entrepreneurship and aims to provide a comprehensive framework for supporting and scaling these impactful ventures.

5.2 Conceptual framework of social enterprises

To ensure a common understanding of social enterprises across different regulatory and economic environments, the GRESODI project defines these entities based on three core characteristics:

1. **Primary social or environmental mission** – The enterprise's primary objective must be to generate positive social or environmental outcomes rather than maximizing shareholder profits.
2. **Sustainable business model** – Social enterprises engage in commercial activities to generate income, allowing them to be financially self-sufficient and reduce reliance on donations or grants.
3. **Profit reinvestment for impact** – Profits are reinvested to further the social mission, rather than distributed among private shareholders.

5.2.1. Identifying problems and challenges

Despite their growing significance, social enterprises face several structural and operational challenges that hinder their scalability and impact:

- **Regulatory uncertainty** – The lack of a unified legal definition often results in inconsistent policy support and difficulties in accessing funding.
- **Limited access to finance** – Traditional banking institutions frequently perceive social enterprises as high-risk due to their impact-first approach.
- **Market recognition** – Many social enterprises struggle with visibility and integrating their products and services into mainstream markets.

- **Skills and capacity development** – Social entrepreneurs often require additional support in business management, impact measurement, and digital transformation.

5.2.2. Common conceptual framework for definitions

A standardized framework is essential to foster cross-border cooperation and policy alignment for social enterprises. The GRESODI project aligns its definition with international best practices, particularly the European Commission's Social Business Initiative and the OECD's guidelines on social entrepreneurship.

This framework includes:

- **Legal recognition** – Advocating for social enterprises to be acknowledged as a distinct legal entity with tailored policy support.
- **Inclusive growth strategies** – Ensuring social enterprises have access to public procurement opportunities and corporate partnerships.
- **Measuring social impact** – Establishing robust methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of social enterprises.

5.2.3. Definition of social enterprises

For the purposes of the GRESODI project, a social enterprise is defined as an organization that:

- Operates with the primary aim of achieving measurable social and/or environmental impact.
- Generates at least part of its revenue through commercial activities.
- Reinvests a significant proportion of its surplus into achieving its mission.
- Adheres to principles of participatory governance and accountability.

5.2.4. Complementary processes: Positioning social enterprises within the entrepreneurial environment

Social enterprises exist within a broader entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes:

- **Public sector collaboration** – Working with government agencies to deliver essential services more efficiently.
- **Private sector partnerships** – Engaging with corporations to integrate social enterprises into supply chains and responsible procurement practices.
- **Academic and research institutions** – Leveraging innovation and knowledge transfer to enhance social business models.

5.2.5. Types of social enterprises

Social enterprises operate in diverse sectors and adopt various organizational structures depending on their mission and operational model. The key types include:

1. **Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs)** – Focused on employment creation for marginalized groups.
2. **Cooperative social enterprises** – Democratically owned and managed entities that provide social goods and services.
3. **Mutual benefit organizations** – Member-based organizations delivering social value to their constituencies.
4. **Hybrid social enterprises** – Entities that blend social impact with innovative business models, often leveraging technology to scale solutions.

By providing clarity on the scope, definitions, and conceptual framework of social enterprises, the GRESODI project seeks to strengthen the policy and financial environment necessary for these enterprises to thrive and maximize their impact.

6.

Characteristics and operational areas of social enterprises



6.1 Key characteristics

Social enterprises possess distinct characteristics that differentiate them from traditional businesses and nonprofit organizations. The following key characteristics define their operations:

- **Mission-driven approach** – The primary goal is to create positive social or environmental change rather than maximizing profit for shareholders.
- **Financial sustainability** – Social enterprises engage in commercial activities to generate revenue that sustains their mission-driven initiatives.
- **Innovation and adaptability** – Many social enterprises employ innovative business models to address pressing societal issues efficiently and sustainably.
- **Participatory governance** – Stakeholders, including employees, beneficiaries, and investors, often have a role in decision-making processes.
- **Impact measurement and accountability** – Social enterprises measure and report their social and environmental impact to ensure transparency and effectiveness.
- **Collaboration-oriented** – They often work closely with governments, businesses, and community organizations to achieve their mission.

6.2 Operational areas and topics

Social enterprises operate in a wide range of industries, addressing diverse social and environmental issues. Some of the primary operational areas include:

- **Workforce integration and employment generation** – Providing training and job opportunities for marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed individuals, and refugees.
- **Education and skill development** – Delivering innovative educational programs and vocational training to enhance workforce competencies.
- **Healthcare and social care** – Offering affordable healthcare, mental health support, and elderly care services.
- **Sustainable agriculture and food security** – Promoting local food production, reducing food waste, and improving access to healthy food options.
- **Circular economy and environmental protection** – Implementing sustainable business models that promote recycling, waste reduction, and resource efficiency.

- **Digital inclusion and technology for good** – Using digital tools and platforms to bridge social gaps and provide equitable access to services.
- **Housing and urban development** – Creating affordable housing solutions and revitalizing communities through social innovation.
- **Fair Trade and ethical consumerism** – Supporting responsible supply chains and offering fair-wage products to promote social justice.

By focusing on these operational areas, social enterprises contribute significantly to social and economic development, aligning their business practices with sustainable and inclusive growth principles. The GRESODI project recognizes these contributions and aims to strengthen their capacity, visibility, and impact through policy support, funding mechanisms, and cross-sector collaboration.

7.

Results and analyses



7.1 SWOT analysis of social enterprises

This joint SWOT analysis summarizes the common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of social enterprises across Austria, Hungary, and Spain. Shared trends are presented in an integrated structure, with country-specific insights included in parentheses or brief annotations. This structure helps reduce repetition and offers a comparative, yet nuanced understanding of the ecosystems.

While the SWOT structure effectively presents shared characteristics and country-specific nuances, a few key patterns emerge from the comparison. Austria and Spain generally exhibit more institutional and infrastructural maturity in supporting social enterprises, while Hungary faces foundational challenges, particularly in legal recognition and digitalization. On the other hand, Hungary shows a dynamic grassroots landscape and strong mission alignment. Spain's cooperative tradition and Austria's established networks stand out as enabling factors. Across all three countries, social enterprises face similar weaknesses—such as overdependence on public funding and low digitalization—but also share opportunities in transnational cooperation, digital and green transition, and the evolving preferences of younger generations. Recognizing both convergence and divergence within these ecosystems can inform more targeted and impactful policy responses



Strengths

- **Mission-driven, socially impactful business models**
Social enterprises inherently pursue a social mission, fostering trust among stakeholders and supporting disadvantaged groups. *(Especially emphasized in Spain and Hungary.)*
- **Strong community embeddedness**
Many social enterprises are rooted in their local communities, enabling trust-building, collaboration, and responsiveness to local needs. *(Observed prominently in Austria and Hungary.)*
- **Agile and adaptive business models**
Enterprises often begin at small scale and adjust rapidly to local or market changes.
- **Diverse expertise and interdisciplinary knowledge**
Social enterprises typically combine skills from social work, business, education, and community development.
- **Positioning in key economic sectors**
Active in areas such as sustainability, social inclusion, green energy, and digital transition. *(E.g. Som Energia in Spain.)*



Weaknesses

- **Lack of dedicated national legal or policy frameworks**
No clear legal definition or strategic recognition of social enterprises. *(Critical in Hungary; Catalonia is awaiting regional law.)*
- **Overdependence on grants and public funding**
Many organizations are not financially self-sustaining and rely on external support.
- **Insufficient professionalisation**
Many enterprises lack training and systems for strategic planning, sales, or CRM. *(Pointed out clearly in Spain and Austria.)*
- **Weak internal networking**
Fragmented ecosystems limit knowledge sharing and collaboration. *(Noted in all countries, particularly Hungary.)*
- **Limited branding and low visibility**
Social enterprises often lack marketing capacities to reach wider audiences.
- **Low digitalization and IT integration**
Poor use of digital tools affects operations and innovation. *(Particularly problematic in Hungary and rural Spain.)*

- **Historical and cultural embeddedness**
Spain (especially Catalonia) benefits from a rich tradition of cooperatives, mutual aid networks, and associative culture.
- **Growing recognition within the civil and business sectors**
Awareness is increasing in all three countries, though mostly outside formal policy channels. *(Most dynamic in Austria and Hungary.)*
- **Slower decision-making in participatory structures**
While democratic governance is a strength, it may hinder responsiveness. *(Specifically noted in Catalonia.)*
- **Founder overburden and risk of "self-slavery"**
Lack of professional management structures may lead to burnout. *(Explicitly flagged in Austria.)*
- **Addiction to public funding**
Some actors use subsidies as a default model rather than a lever. *(Raised in the Spanish context.)*
- **Absence of universally accepted metrics to quantify social impact**
The lack of standardized frameworks and indicators makes it difficult to communicate effectiveness to stakeholders and funders. *(Acknowledged in all three countries.)*



Opportunities

- **National policy advocacy**
Developing comprehensive social enterprise strategies, including legal recognition and funding mechanisms. *(A key need in Hungary and Austria.)*
- **Corporate partnerships and ESG integration**
Interest from companies in sustained collaboration beyond donations. *(Especially mentioned in Austria and Hungary.)*
- **Digitalization and green transition**
New technologies and sustainability challenges open up areas for impact-driven innovation.
- **Integration into education and training systems**
Embedding social entrepreneurship in university curricula and adult education. *(Ongoing in Austria and parts of Spain.)*
- **Transnational collaboration and peer learning**
GRESODI itself demonstrates the value of cross-border knowledge transfer and joint incubation.
- **Shifting workforce preferences**
Growing demand for purpose-driven, value-aligned



Threats

- **Policy stagnation and lack of institutional leadership**
Absence of dedicated government bodies hampers systemic support. *(Especially in Hungary and Austria.)*
- **Short-term funding cycles**
Grants and programs are often time-limited, making long-term planning difficult. *(Reported in all countries.)*
- **Economic instability and consumer price sensitivity**
Rising inflation and crises reduce capacity to pay for socially beneficial but costlier services/products.
- **Greenwashing and unfair competition**
Traditional businesses adopt social/green branding without genuine impact, making it harder for SEs to differentiate. *(Highlighted in Spain and Austria.)*
- **Lack of skilled workforce combining social and business know-how**
Social enterprises struggle to find hybrid-skilled employees.
- **Digital exclusion in rural areas and among older populations**
Urban-rural divide limits scaling of digital solutions. *(Critical in rural Hungary and small Catalan towns.)*

employment options. *(Noted in Spain as a generational trend.)*

- **Inter-cooperation among social enterprises**

Potential to scale and increase impact through resource sharing and strategic alliances.

- **Entrenched networks and entry barriers**

Strong existing ecosystems may block new actors from accessing markets or support. *(Particularly mentioned in Catalonia and Austria.)*

- **Reduction of impact-oriented funding streams**

A decline in mission-driven funding, especially at early stages, could hinder scaling. *(Concern in Austria.)*

- **Rising individualistic/anti-solidarity sentiments**

Libertarian political narratives may weaken societal support for collective, impact-focused enterprises. *(Raised by Austrian stakeholders.)*

7.2 Problem tree and analysis

The previous sections have outlined the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) shaping the ecosystem of social enterprises across Hungary, Austria, and Spain. As a complementary tool, the **problem tree** methodology allows us to unpack these weaknesses and threats in a structured, causal logic. It shifts the focus from mere symptoms toward the deeper systemic and structural conditions that hinder the development of social enterprises, particularly in Hungary.

This section presents a **simplified but harmonized problem tree** built around four core *root causes*, each linked to a corresponding *central problem* and its broader *societal effect*. The structure follows a classical format:

- **Root causes** (bottom): underlying structural and policy-level barriers,
- **Main problems** (middle): issues experienced by social enterprises at the organizational level,
- **Effects** (top): consequences observed in the wider socio-economic context

The analysis reflects insights from stakeholder consultations, national assessments, and project experience, maintaining consistency with the earlier narrative while offering a clear and transferable template for international comparison.

7.2.1. AUSTRIA

To capture the Austrian context, the problem tree points to two interconnected chains that limit the development of the social enterprise sector. These chains reflect both structural gaps in entrepreneurial culture and education, as well as weaknesses in investment and policy frameworks. Together, they explain why too few impact enterprises are being founded and why existing ones remain fragile, leaving large parts of the potential for innovation and regional development untapped.



1. Entrepreneurial culture and education gap

Austria's entrepreneurial culture remains comparatively risk-averse, with a preference for secure employment and established organisational models. Education systems provide limited exposure to social entrepreneurship, and hybrid skillsets that combine business acumen with social and environmental missions are rarely fostered. Outside metropolitan centres such as Vienna or Graz, opportunities for young people to encounter impact-driven business models are scarce.

- **Problem:** These factors result in too few new impact enterprises being founded. The pipeline of entrepreneurs entering the sector is weak, and initiatives that do emerge often rely heavily on individual motivation rather than systemic support.
- **Effect:** The consequence is an underutilisation of innovation potential, particularly in green and digital fields where social enterprises could offer pioneering solutions. Regional disparities are reinforced as rural and peripheral areas fail to benefit from social enterprise activity, leading to missed opportunities for local revitalisation and community resilience.

2. Investment and policy framework gap

Although Austria has an active network of social entrepreneurship advocates, the policy framework remains underdeveloped. There is no dedicated legal status for social enterprises, and tax or procurement incentives are inconsistent. Financial instruments tailored to social impact are limited, with early-stage ventures facing particular difficulties in accessing patient capital or impact investment. Stakeholders report that funding streams are fragmented and often short-term, which prevents continuity and scaling.

- **Problem:** As a result, many existing social enterprises remain small-scale and struggle to professionalise or expand. Their ability to compete in mainstream markets or secure long-term partnerships is limited, leaving them vulnerable to funding cycles and donor expectations.

- **Effect:** The broader economic and social contribution of Austrian social enterprises remains well below potential. Opportunities to generate employment, accelerate sustainability transitions, and strengthen social cohesion are missed. Without more enabling conditions, Austria risks falling behind other European countries that have introduced clear legal recognition, supportive tax measures, and more structured financing ecosystems for impact enterprises.

In summary, the Austrian problem tree highlights how cultural, educational, financial, and policy-related gaps combine to significantly limit the creation and growth of social enterprises. The outcome is a structural underperformance in impact-oriented innovation and regional development, despite strong societal demand and available expertise.

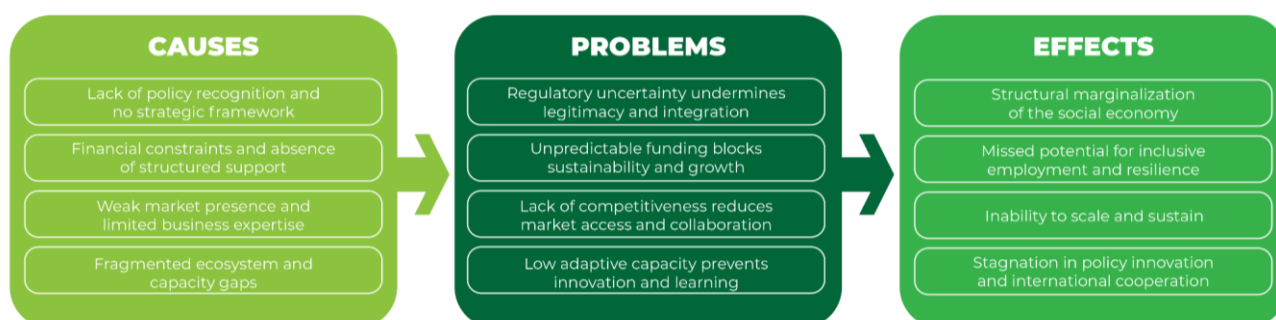
7.2.2. HUNGARY

Problem tree

To fully understand the underlying challenges faced by social enterprises in Hungary, a layered and systemic analysis is needed. While the SWOT framework provides a broad overview, the **problem tree** methodology enables us to identify root causes, formulate concrete problem statements, and trace the wider societal consequences.

This section builds on earlier stakeholder discussions and national insights, organising the analysis into **four interconnected problem chains**—each comprising:

- A **root cause** (structural background),
- A **central problem** (organisational-level manifestation),
- An **effect** (wider social or economic consequence).



1. Policy and institutional vacuum

Hungary lacks a formal legal definition and strategic framework for social enterprises. There is no designated governmental body responsible for this field, and social enterprises are weakly integrated into national economic development policies. This policy void creates uncertainty for stakeholders, hinders long-term planning, and leaves the sector outside key resource and planning systems.

- **Problem:** Regulatory uncertainty undermines the credibility and legitimacy of social enterprises, limiting their ability to engage with public programmes or influence policymaking.
- **Effect:** As a result, the sector remains structurally marginalised and excluded from mainstream economic and innovation frameworks.

2. Financial instability and lack of structured support

Social enterprises in Hungary often rely on fragmented and short-term grant funding, with limited access to capital investment or alternative finance. Investors are generally risk-averse, and no national mechanisms provide dedicated tax incentives, social finance, or blended financial tools tailored to the sector.

- **Problem:** This creates a volatile financial environment in which social enterprises cannot plan sustainably or grow beyond project-based survival.
- **Effect:** It leads to missed opportunities for long-term employment creation, sectoral growth, and resilience building—especially in disadvantaged communities.

3. Weak market presence and business capacity

Many social enterprises struggle to build competitive and recognisable brands. Without strong marketing skills or strategic positioning, they remain invisible to consumers and business partners. Corporate actors often hesitate to collaborate due to a lack of trust or clarity about the value proposition of SEs.

- **Problem:** As a result, social enterprises lack access to broader markets, value chains, or long-term partnerships.
- **Effect:** This prevents them from achieving scale, replicability, or economic viability beyond their local niche.

4. Fragmented ecosystem and capacity gaps

The sector operates in silos, with limited collaboration and knowledge transfer among actors. Formal business education, training programmes, and digital literacy initiatives are scarce. Tools for impact measurement are underdeveloped, and access to digital solutions is particularly poor in rural areas.

- **Problem:** This creates a low-capacity environment, where social enterprises cannot adapt to changing needs or engage meaningfully in innovation processes.
- **Effect:** Consequently, Hungary's SE sector falls behind in delivering transformative solutions, addressing inequalities, or participating in green and digital transitions at European level.

7.2.3. SPAIN

In Spain, social and solidarity economy (SSE) organizations face structural barriers that limit their strategic development and long-term sustainability. The following problem tree illustrates the interconnected causes and consequences of the core challenge: the sector's limited strategic vision and professionalization. It highlights key governance, financial, and capacity-related deficiencies that hinder growth, resilience, and talent retention across the SSE ecosystem.



1) Core Problem:

Limited strategic vision and lack of professionalization: Many SSE organizations struggle with weak governance, financial instability, and a lack of long-term strategic vision, limiting their growth and sustainability.

2) Root Causes:

Weak governance & leadership gaps: Unclear decision-making processes and lack of leadership development hinder efficiency and long-term planning.

Limited resources & financial vulnerability: Small organizations with few reserves rely heavily on external funding, making them financially unstable.

Skills & professionalization deficit: Low investment in training, financial management, and digitalization weakens strategic vision and operational efficiency.

3) Consequences:

Organizational & financial fragility: Poor resource allocation and funding dependency increase economic instability and reactive decision-making.

Limited growth & scalability: Lack of strategic planning and innovation prevents organizations from expanding or securing key partnerships.

Challenges in talent retention & management: Weak governance and financial instability lead to stagnant career paths and difficulties in attracting and retaining talent.

Many SSE organizations struggle with limited strategic vision and professionalization, leading to inefficiencies in decision-making, financial instability, and weak long-term planning. Poor governance structures and lack of leadership development hinder coordination and make it difficult to implement structured decision-making processes. Additionally, heavy reliance on external funding and lack of income diversification create financial vulnerability, while low investment in professional training and digitalization reduces adaptability and operational efficiency.

To overcome these challenges, organizations must strengthen governance and leadership by developing structured decision-making frameworks and leadership training. Enhancing professionalization and capacity building through financial, operational, and digital training can improve efficiency and resilience. Likewise, improving financial sustainability by diversifying revenue streams and implementing long-term financial planning will reduce funding dependency. Lastly, fostering intercooperation, adaptability, and innovative business strategies will ensure scalability and long-term success.

8.

Future vision and mission



8.1 Vision and mission of social enterprises

8.1.1. Future Vision

By 2035, social enterprises will be fully recognised as key contributors to Europe's green, digital, and social transitions. They will no longer be seen as marginal initiatives, but as essential partners in addressing systemic challenges such as climate change, digital exclusion, rural decline, and social inequalities. Social enterprises will be embedded in national and regional development strategies, supported by clear legal frameworks, sustainable financing tools, and inclusive ecosystems. Their growth will demonstrate that entrepreneurial activity can combine competitiveness with responsibility, proving that impact and innovation go hand in hand.

8.1.2. Mission

The mission of social enterprises is to merge entrepreneurial practices with strong social and environmental purposes. They seek to achieve measurable, positive change for communities and the environment while maintaining economic viability. Unlike traditional businesses, their primary aim is not profit maximisation but the creation of long-term societal value. They design and deliver solutions that respond to local and global needs, from providing jobs for vulnerable groups to developing circular economy models and digital inclusion tools. Their mission is to act as bridges between civil society, policymakers, and markets, ensuring that innovation benefits people and the planet alike.

8.1.3. Purpose

The overarching purpose of social enterprises is to demonstrate that business can be a force for sustainable development. They stand at the intersection of economy and society, proving that financial performance can reinforce, rather than undermine, social justice and environmental sustainability. Their purpose can be summarised along three dimensions:

- **Social impact:** delivering services and opportunities that strengthen social cohesion and inclusion.
- **Environmental impact:** reducing ecological footprints, advancing renewable and circular solutions, and fostering sustainable lifestyles.
- **Economic impact:** stimulating local economies, creating quality jobs, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas, and contributing to resilience and competitiveness.

8.1.4. Objectives

To realise this vision and mission, social enterprises and their ecosystems should pursue the following objectives:

1. Strengthen Policy and Ecosystem Support

- Secure legal recognition and tailored strategies for social enterprises at national and EU level.
- Build regional hubs and cross-border networks to improve visibility, capacity, and cooperation.

2. Ensure Access to Sustainable Finance

- Develop diverse funding instruments (impact investment, blended finance, social bonds).
- Link financial support to measurable social and environmental outcomes.

3. Promote Education and Skills

- Integrate social entrepreneurship into curricula at all levels of education.
- Provide targeted training in business management, digitalisation, and green innovation.

4. Foster Digital and Green Innovation

- Support adoption of digital tools and platforms for scaling and inclusion.
- Incentivise circular economy models and environmentally sustainable business practices.

5. Enhance Visibility and Credibility

- Establish national and European branding, labelling, and certification systems.
- Promote communication campaigns and platforms that showcase impact.

6. Embed Monitoring and Impact Measurement

- Apply international best practices such as the Theory of Change and Social Impact Assessment.
- Create transparent reporting systems accessible to policymakers, funders, and communities.

9.

Summary of the GRESODI incubation process including the Impact Lab and the Bootcamp



9.1 Outcomes

Key outcomes of the incubation process.

9.1.1. Summary of Impact Lab

AUSTRIA

In Austria, the **Impact Lab took place on 12 February 2024** under the coordination of the Social Business Hub Styria. The event was organised in a hybrid format in order to ensure accessibility for participants from different parts of the region. A total of seven aspiring and early-stage social entrepreneurs attended the workshop, five in person and two online. The group size allowed a focused interaction and intensive feedback.

The Impact Lab followed a **three-hour programme** designed to introduce participants to the fundamentals of impact-oriented business models and to provide structured space for idea development. The problem tree method was presented and applied as a practical tool for identifying root causes, core problems and expected effects in the context of each project idea. This exercise enabled the participants to move beyond generic mission statements and to analyse their initiatives in a more systemic way, connecting social or ecological challenges to entrepreneurial responses.

Participants were invited to map their own project concepts, reflect on the **potential social and environmental impacts** across the value chain, and test their assumptions in group discussions. Attention was given to green and digital aspects, encouraging participants to explore how these dimensions could be embedded from the outset in their emerging business models.

The workshop produced several tangible results. Participants were able to gain a different perspective on their ideas and imagination of potential pathways to implementation. The session also generated a set of structured problem statements. Importantly, the Lab helped participants to gain a better understanding of how **economic viability and social mission** can be aligned, laying the foundation for further business model development.

Throughout the workshop, expert facilitation was provided to support the process of idea generation. Moderators introduced key concepts of social business and sustainability. This external input proved essential in ensuring that participants could frame their ideas not only in terms of social benefit, but also in relation to **market relevance and operational feasibility**.

The attitude and engagement of participants was consistently positive. They actively contributed to group exercises, shared experiences, and showed openness to feedback from both peers and experts. The feedback collected at the end of the event confirmed that the Lab provided useful orientation and inspiration. It also highlighted the value of the collaborative format, which allowed individuals to step outside their own perspective and test their ideas in dialogue with others.

In summary, the Austrian Impact Lab **served as an entry point into the incubation process**. By equipping participants with expert input and feedback, fostering early peer networks, and embedding green and digital considerations into business planning, the event achieved its purpose of preparing social entrepreneurs for the next stages of development within the GRESODI programme.

HUNGARY

The Hungarian event took place on April 11, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (6 hours) in Miskolc at the Baráthegyi Majorság. Number of participants: 19 people. The six-hour workshop provided an opportunity for applicants to refine their ideas, focusing on embedding sustainability, green and digital innovation into social business models. The event provided a collaborative space to develop and refine concepts, ensuring they meet the current needs and future direction of social entrepreneurship.

The Impact Lab began with relevant presentations on the topic, aimed at sharing knowledge. Within the framework of the workshop - the participants were divided into three teams - idea generation took place along three issues in the field of social enterprise management: 1. Horizontal topics - sustainable development, green-digital, integration of disadvantaged groups. 2. market topic. 3. operation topic. We asked guiding questions in all three topics, which helped the candidates formulate the challenges and problems. Subsequently, solution proposals were also made in all three cases.

The event helped the participants to reflect on the situation of their business and their internal motivation. And with the formulation of solutions, the ways forward began to take shape.

The candidates were active throughout the event, enthusiastically participating in the tasks. They accepted the help and suggestions of the experts.

SPAIN

The Impact Lab in Catalonia was a workshop held on April 18, 2024, at Lab Manlleu in Manlleu, Spain, which saw the participation of 10 people. The event was designed to help participants identify business needs, improve digital environments, and maximize their social and eco-friendly impact.

The day began with a presentation of the GRESODI project for those new to the community, outlining its main goals, calendar, emphasizing the activities and tools that would be most beneficial for participants and understand the network of support available to them.

The workshop of the Impact Lab included several hands-on activities. After establishing "work agreements", participants were aligned with the lab's core concepts: Digital, Ecological, and Social.

A brainstorming session using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was used to foster broad and creative thinking about how their initiatives could contribute to global goals. Also, participants were then introduced to tools like the Social Business Canvas and the Impact Journey, which helped them map out their business models and understand the steps needed to achieve their desired impact.

The final team activity, "Wise Crowds," provided a collaborative space for participants to give each other feedback and support. The event concluded with a wrap-up that highlighted key takeaways and recapped the next GRESODI event, followed by a final catering session for informal networking

9.1.2. Summary of Bootcamps

AUSTRIA

In Austria, the impact basis training was organised by the Social Business Hub Styria as a three-part programme, delivered on 5, 8 and 13 March 2024. The sessions were held in a hybrid format to accommodate participants from across the region and to allow for flexible participation. In total, eight participants took part in the Bootcamp, representing a group of early-stage social entrepreneurs with project ideas in various fields of social and ecological innovation.

The Bootcamp was designed as an intensive process that combined theoretical input with practical application. Over the course of the three sessions, participants were introduced to the Social Business Model Canvas and guided step by step in applying it to their own projects. Each block of the programme addressed key dimensions of social business development, including value proposition design, market research and segmentation, basic financial planning and impact assessment, as well as the integration of green and digital components.

The methodological approach relied on interactive training and collaborative group work. Expert trainers from the Hub provided structured input on each topic and then facilitated small-group exercises, where participants worked directly on

refining their business models. This process was complemented by individualised mentoring and feedback, ensuring that each participant could adapt the general framework to their specific context. In the final session, participants were asked to prepare and deliver a short pitch of their project, which served both as a learning exercise in presentation skills and as an opportunity to receive constructive feedback from peers and trainers.

As a results, each participant left the programme with a more coherent and detailed (social) business model, supported by a clearer articulation of social mission, target groups, and sustainability strategies. Green and digital aspects were systematically embedded into the models.

Trainers and mentors not only introduced methodological tools but also shared practical insights from their own experience in supporting social enterprises. This combination of technical expertise and applied advice gave participants confidence to address typical challenges such as balancing social goals with financial viability, positioning themselves in competitive markets, and preparing for future funding opportunities.

The engagement and attitude of participants were consistently positive throughout the three sessions. Despite the small group size, or perhaps because of it, collaboration was intensive, and participants were open to exchanging experiences and offering feedback.

HUNGARY

In Hungary, the event took place between May 7-9, 2024. in Miskolc at the Baráthegyi Majorság. Number of participants: 22 participants. Event duration: first day 6 hours; second day 8 hours; third day 6 hours.

The Bootcamp was a three-day intensive, in-depth professional program that provided assistance in developing a social enterprise regardless of the stage of implementation of their business idea: idea phase, founding, development, growth, stagnation. Participants were able to deeply understand and develop the business model of their social enterprise.

The three-day Bootcamp provided assistance and training to participants in the following topics: social entrepreneurship basics, pitching and presentation skills, the CANVAS model, market research, sustainability and impact assessment, digitalization and green transition, team building and collaboration, financial aspects, communication channels. During the innovation workshop, participants received continuous mentoring and feedback from expert mentors.

The first day's program - "Where are you now?", which covered its content well, the participants received an introduction from the definition of social enterprises to their situation in Hungary to financial financing options, then they got to know each other in a playful way, and with the help of professional moderation they were able to gain an insight into the goals and challenges of each other's businesses.

In addition to building relationships and transferring knowledge, they also completed a self-assessment test, and at the end of the day they formulated development ideas for their businesses, taking into account each other's experiences and the suggestions of the mentors.

The question for the second day of the event was: "Where do you want to go?", to which the answer was based on the knowledge established on the first day and on business development ideas prepared in small groups. With the involvement of an external expert trainer and the help of experts from the HÁRFA Foundation and EX ANTE Consulting Ltd., the participants worked in three stages on preparing their social enterprise development plan using the CANVAS model. In the second half of the workshop day, the participants listened to a presentation and lecture on planning the use of digital/green vouchers, the effective use of digital marketing, and pitching and presentation skills. The day ended with individual counseling and a group photo.

The motto of the third and final day was "How do you tell others?", indicating that on this day the participants presented their social enterprise development plans in the form of 5-minute pitches, and received feedback from expert mentors and other participants. The development plan was given a project name and title by the pitch presenters, and they gave a five-minute presentation by showing the completed CANVAS model of the project on flipcharts, using the skills, knowledge and approach they had acquired during the intensive first two days of the Social Innovation Workshop. The basic knowledge of social entrepreneurship was useful in these, so they specifically placed their own plan in the "coordinate system" of the CANVAS model based on the definition, they tried to imagine the development plan of their own business through step-by-step but effective development with the help of the approach gained during the workshop on market research, sustainability and impact assessment, there was a pitch that planned its own development based on a presentation on digital marketing, and each required the application of pitching and presentation skills. After the 5-minute pitches, the speakers received helpful questions and feedback from expert mentors, discussing what was said together, thus refining the planning of each project, promoting their success.

The participants actively participated in the event throughout all three days, eagerly awaiting the tasks and accepting expert/mentor support.

SPAIN

The Bootcamp in Catalonia was a three-day intensive program that took place at Lab Manlleu in Manlleu, Spain, from May 13 to May 15, 2024. It was an intensive and comprehensive program aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and skills needed to develop their social business models. Nine individuals representing eight different organizations participated over the course of the event.

The first day of the bootcamp was dedicated to the Green Economy. The session began with an icebreaker activity to build a collaborative atmosphere. Participants then heard an inspirational talk from a leader in the green economy, the cooperative Espai Ambiental, who discussed the significance of eco and social initiatives and their impact on society. The second part of the day was a workshop focused on the fundamentals of a social business model, where participants received a global explanation of the Social Business Canvas tool to guide their project development. The workshop utilized dynamic activities like "Dixit" to spark creativity and the "Yes, but" dynamic to consider potential challenges and drawbacks.

The second day focused on Digitalization. It began with a presentation from FACTO's digital expert, who covered key trends and how to manage resources to digitalize organizational processes. The Social Business Canvas workshop's main objective was to refine the value proposition, identify target segments, and establish customer relationships and revenue streams. This was facilitated through the Customer Journey dynamic, which helped participants map out their customers' experiences and needs.

The final day's theme was Social / Communication. The session began with a presentation from a marketing expert who emphasized understanding the true needs and motivations of customers. A dynamic activity using the "Persona" tool helped participants delve into understanding their target audience. The third part of the Social Business Canvas workshop was dedicated to completing the tool for each project, where participants focused on identifying key resources, activities, partners, stakeholders, and the cost structure.

The bootcamp concluded with a micro elevator pitch session, where teams used the "Cubes Stories" dynamic to present their projects succinctly and compellingly. The three-day program provided a rich blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring participants left with a clear Social Business Canvas and an actionable plan to move their projects forward.

9.1.3. Group Training

AUSTRIA

As part of the Austrian incubation programme, a total of **eight group training sessions** were organised between **June 2024 and June 2025**. The trainings were mainly hosted in Graz at the **UNICORN start-up centre**, with most sessions offered in **hybrid format** to ensure accessibility for participants from across Styria.

List of sessions (Austria):

0. Team building day (13.06.2024) – Heidenspass / CirculART
1. Professional Sales for Entrepreneurs (17.09.2024) – Reinhard Neudorfer
2. Digital Marketing Strategies (15.10.2024) – Rudolf Grutschnig
3. Venture Jour Fixe: Sonnenschmiede (15.10.2024) – Johannes Frühmann
4. Crowdfunding for Social & Green Entrepreneurs (12.11.2024) – Rüdiger Wetzl
5. Venture Jour Fixe: Purkarthofer Ice Cream Manufacture (12.11.2024) – Klaus Purkarthofer
6. Digital Skills for Impact Entrepreneurs (10.12.2024) – David Prott
7. AI for Social Entrepreneurs and Start-ups (11.02.2025) – Michael Freidl
8. Sustainable Financial Planning (06.06.2025) – Daniel Kofler

Sales and marketing competences

The programme placed strong emphasis on equipping participants with practical skills in **sales and marketing**. A workshop on professional sales introduced entrepreneurs to the logic of structured sales processes, digital tools, and measurable performance indicators. The subsequent session on digital marketing strategies highlighted how social and green ventures can build authentic brands, reach the right audiences, and avoid common pitfalls such as greenwashing. A dedicated workshop on **crowdfunding** further strengthened participants' understanding of alternative financing models and how to design impact-driven campaigns. Together, these sessions enabled participants to develop clearer value propositions and to communicate their social and ecological missions more effectively.

Digital competences

Several workshops focused specifically on **digitalisation and technology skills**. A session on digital skills for impact entrepreneurs introduced participants to accounting software, CRM systems, and other productivity tools that can streamline operations. The training on **AI for social entrepreneurs** extended this digital learning by demonstrating concrete applications of generative AI in everyday business practice, while also addressing risks such as data protection and bias.

Financial literacy

The **Sustainable Financial Planning** workshop addressed another recurring challenge for early-stage social enterprises: how to build credibility with investors and manage financial flows responsibly. Participants were introduced to the essentials of liquidity planning, taxation, and cost calculation, supported by practical exercises and examples.

Learning from role models and team building

In addition to technical competences, the Austrian programme emphasised **peer learning and inspiration from successful entrepreneurs**. Two **Jour Fixe sessions** allowed participants to engage directly with local role models: Sonnenschmiede GmbH, an innovator in community-based renewable energy, and Purkarthofer Eis, a pioneer in sustainable food production

Engagement and feedback

Participation across sessions ranged from **7 to 16 entrepreneurs**, depending on the topic. Engagement levels were consistently high: many sessions exceeded their scheduled time due to active discussions and peer exchange. Feedback surveys show a clear majority of participants rated the trainings as **useful or very useful** for their own project development. For example, 75% found the crowdfunding workshop highly relevant, over 80% rated the digital skills session as useful or very useful.

Conclusion

Overall, the Austrian group training series successfully combined **practical capacity-building, digital upskilling, financial literacy, and inspiration through role models**. The mix of formats and the involvement of experienced trainers created a balanced learning environment that supported participants in strengthening both the technical and cultural foundations of their ventures. Together with the Impact Lab and Bootcamp, these trainings formed a coherent development pathway, preparing social entrepreneurs in Styria for further growth and long-term sustainability.

HUNGARY

In Hungary, the group training consisted of six sessions, each session lasting two hours. The dates are as follows: October 15, 2024 (2 training sessions), November 12, 2024, January 14, 2025, March 11, 2025 and May 13, 2025.

Number of participants: 1st time - 10 people, 2nd time - 10 people, 3rd - 10 people, 4th - 8 people, 5th - 9 people and 6th - 8 people.

Topics: 1. Organizational development structures. 2. Networking in practice, marketing. 3. Sales, marketing. 4. Financing, finances, application opportunities. 5. Digitalization, the possibilities of artificial intelligence. 6. Future planning, impact planning. At each training session, the instructor compiled the material in such a way that new information on the relevant topic was presented, as well as useful knowledge that would help the candidates apply this acquired knowledge to their business as effectively as possible.

Eight people received certificates during the training.

Participants regarded the first training session as useful and well-structured, particularly appreciating the combination of lectures and collaborative tasks.

SPAIN

The GRESODI incubation program in Spain included six training sessions exclusively for the five participating projects: Sequoia Ecovila, Món Viu, Agalla, La Recol·lectora, and Col·lectiu Argelaga.

These sessions provided valuable training in different aspects, with content and format adapted to the participants' needs and availability. The overall assessment of the training was very positive, with projects highlighting its practical approach and direct applicability to their work.

The first session, "**Finance basics and financial plan**," was held on October 29, 2024, and lasted three hours. Three projects attended in person, while two joined online, as the session was offered in a hybrid format. This training provided a comprehensive overview of financial management, focusing on economic viability, budget planning, and cash flow. It concluded with a hands-on exercise where participants created a budget for a cooperative café.

On December 2, 2024, all five projects attended the second training session, "**Responsible marketing for impact-driven projects**," which was held online and lasted three hours. The session redefined marketing as understanding people's needs and highlighted the importance of a well-defined value proposition. The most engaging part of the training was the Buyer Persona activity, which helped participants create detailed profiles of their ideal clients, leading to more personalized and effective communication strategies.

The third session, "**Strategic thinking to grow your project**," took place online on January 22, 2025, and lasted three hours with all projects in attendance. The training provided a structured approach to business strategy, clarifying key concepts and introducing practical tools such as the Double Diamond model and the Business Model Canvas for structuring value propositions. The latter half of the session focused on a hands-on application where participants drafted strategic frameworks for their projects, leaving them with actionable methodologies.

"**Essential digital tools for your project**" was the fourth session, held on April 25, 2025, with a duration of two hours. Four projects attended live, while the recording was sent to the fifth. The training offered a comprehensive examination of digital tools to enhance organizational productivity. It included a comparative analysis of open-source and proprietary software and a practical exercise where participants used a prioritization matrix to identify the most suitable tools for their unique operational contexts.

The fifth training session, "**Audiovisual communication and video creation**," was an online workshop on May 27, 2025, lasting two hours. Three projects attended live, with the recording shared with the two projects that could not join. The session, led by an expert from Agita Cooperative, provided a comprehensive toolkit for creating compelling video pitches and audiovisual communication. Participants learned to structure their pitches around key elements and received a toolkit of free production resources and best practices.

The final session, "**Public financing and grant opportunities**," was held online on July 16, 2025, and lasted two hours. Four projects attended live, with a recording shared with the fifth. The training began with a warm-up activity and covered key concepts of grants, from pre-application preparation to financial planning and post-award reporting. The "Hands-On Practice" component allowed participants to work on case studies and discuss real-world scenarios, which helped them clarify concepts and apply the knowledge within their own organizations.

9.1.4. Coaching, mentoring

AUSTRIA

During the Austrian incubation, each start-up team received **individual coaching and mentoring** over the full programme period from **May 2024 to May 2025**. The sessions were facilitated by **Kirsten Tangemann** and **Rüdiger Wetzl** from Social Business Hub Styria, ensuring that every venture had access to tailored, professional guidance.

The process followed a structured approach. At the outset, every enterprise participated in an **initial diagnostic session**, which mapped the status quo across key dimensions of their development, such as their impact model, value proposition, financial plan, and market approach. Based on this assessment, the coaches worked with each venture in a series of targeted follow-up sessions, addressing concrete challenges ranging from funding strategies and governance structures to product development and stakeholder engagement. At the end of the twelve-month period, a **final diagnostic session** was conducted to re-assess the ventures and make progress visible. This closing step also served to highlight the areas where participants gained progress.

The Austrian start-ups that benefitted from this process were:

- **Entropia**
- **Monstory**
- **Sustainable Events Academy**
- **Dualify (DUA)**
- **SozKom Academy**
- (*Pflegedeutsch* participated until February 2025 but did not continue with incubation.)

The **attitude of the applicants** was generally constructive and proactive. Most teams approached the coaching with openness and readiness to reflect on their own development paths. Trustful working relationships developed quickly between coaches and entrepreneurs, which allowed for an honest exchange about challenges and potential solutions.

In terms of **cooperation**, the ventures were consistently engaged. They attended their scheduled sessions, prepared inputs, and (almost always) worked on agreed follow-up tasks. Start-ups also demonstrated a willingness to adapt their strategies in response to feedback, which strengthened the overall impact of the mentoring. The only exception was the early withdrawal of one venture, which nonetheless reflected the programme's value as a testing ground for entrepreneurial feasibility.

Looking back, the coaching and mentoring process can be regarded as **successful**. The participating start-ups improved the clarity of their business models, enhanced their strategic and operational competences, and strengthened their ability to align social impact with financial viability. The comparison of the initial and final diagnostic sessions clearly demonstrated progress across the key fields of analysis and highlighted both their readiness and needs for the next stages of development.

HUNGARY

Mentoring took place in Hungary during this phase for all five participants. It was a joint decision from both organizations that we chose mentoring instead of coaching. We found it to be more suitable for the applying organizations. We have assigned a mentor to each organization. The experts from Ex Ante Ltd. and the Hárfa Foundation are also trained mentors.

The process: since we already knew the applicants and their projects, the warming-up introductory first meeting could be combined with the first session.

At the beginning of the incubation process for every project, we started with the 1st diagnostic session; here we filled out a questionnaire, which allowed us to assess the current situation of the businesses and co-create the goals. In the middle phase of the incubation, the 2nd session took place, where we evaluated the process so far and updated/specified further tasks and goals if necessary. At the end of the incubation, the 3rd session was held, where we filled out the questionnaire again and examined how far the social enterprise had progressed. This was also when the evaluation of the mentoring was conducted from the organization's perspective. In addition to all this, optional mentoring sessions took place continuously with the organizations according to their needs. We continuously monitored the development of the social enterprises throughout the entire incubation.

The applicants approached the process with an open mind. The first diagnostic session was an 'aha' moment for almost everyone; they had to rethink and articulate many things, which helped them understand the functioning of their organization and articulate their goals.

The organizations were cooperative throughout the entire mentoring process, actively participated in the mentoring, and applied what was formulated there in practical life. In Hungarian context, we consider the mentoring process to be successful.

SPAIN

During the incubation process, alongside the group training sessions, individual mentoring was also provided to all participating projects. Each project received a minimum of three mentoring sessions, each lasting at least one hour.

The mentoring was organized following a clear procedure: the program coordination team contacted the incubated projects to schedule dates and times for the sessions. Based on both the expertise of our entrepreneurship professionals

and the specific interests or needs identified by each project, the mentoring topics were jointly agreed upon. After each session, a report was shared with the coordination team, detailing the content covered, progress made, and pending tasks.

The first mentoring session was delivered by Facto's staff specialized in entrepreneurship and served as a diagnosis stage. It aimed to assess the participants' personal skills, business idea, and the current development phase of their project. In addition, participants were asked to complete the self-diagnosis tool, where they evaluated different areas of their project.

The second and subsequent mentoring sessions were scheduled in agreement with the incubated projects and delivered by Facto's expert advisors in the relevant areas. For each session, a feedback report was drafted and shared with the program coordinators to ensure proper follow-up and alignment.

The mentoring topics covered a wide range of areas, including digitalization, communication, and public funding. However, the most in-demand sessions were those focused on financial guidance, marketing, and commercialization strategies. These sessions also became valuable spaces for reviewing the progress of the voucher scheme, making key decisions, and gathering feedback on its implementation.

At the end of the incubation process, final mentoring sessions were held. In addition to providing tailored advice, participants once again completed the self-diagnosis tool. This allowed both the mentors and the projects to measure progress and identify changes that had taken place throughout the incubation journey.

The mentoring proved to be a useful space for participants: it provided personalized support, answered specific questions, and allowed them to work more deeply on the areas most relevant to their projects. Beyond technical guidance, the sessions created a safe and constructive environment where participants could test ideas, define their strategies, and gain confidence in moving their initiatives forward.

9.1.5. Networking Events

AUSTRIA

The central networking activity of the Austrian incubation programme was the **Social Business Meet & Greet 2024, held on 20 November 2024** at the UNICORN Startup & Innovation Hub in Graz. The event brought together more than 100 participants, including the Austrian incubated ventures, alumni of earlier programmes, stakeholders from the regional social business ecosystem, and international partners from Hungary and Spain.

The programme was designed to give visibility to the incubated start-ups and to connect them with potential partners, funders, and fellow entrepreneurs. The incubated Austrian teams had the opportunity to present their projects, outlining their social mission, business model, and current stage of development. This was

complemented by inputs from project partners and a panel discussion on the future of green and social entrepreneurship in Europe.

For many of the start-ups, the Meet & Greet represented the first opportunity to present their work to a larger external audience. At the same time, the event highlighted the regional and transnational dimensions of the incubation programme, making clear how Austrian ventures are part of a broader European effort to advance social innovation.

HUNGARY

The networking event took place in Miskolc (Hotel Pannónia), on June 3, 2025. The event was attended by 30 people in person and 37 people online. The event first featured a brief presentation of the GRESODI project, followed by the introductions of the incubated social enterprises. The social enterprises also prepared a video presentation, which was supplemented verbally. Those who successfully completed the training received their certificates at the event. This was followed by two presentations: Perspectives of Social Enterprises and Technology and Digitalization for the Development of Social Enterprises. In the third part of the event, we held a roundtable discussion on the topic: Success Factors in the Development of Social Enterprises. The event ended with a networking dinner, where further connections could be made.

The significance of the event is that we were able to provide visibility to the businesses we support with this event, and we were also able to help build relationships.

SPAIN

The networking event was held on May 29, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Barcelona Activa's Innobadora. There were 17 participants, including incubated projects from both the GRESODI program and Barcelona Activa's incubation program. The primary objective was to create a platform for peer learning, mutual support, and fostering connections among social and solidarity economy projects.

The event's program began with an inaugural talk by L'Olivera Cooperativa, an organization that integrates ecosocial transition principles into their projects. This was followed by a roundtable discussion where established organizations like Bildi Grafiks, Jamgo, and L'Escamot shared their experiences. The discussion centered on how the local environment had influenced their development, offering advice on local impact, digitalization, and communication strategies.

The event then moved to an interactive networking session in a speed dating format, where participants were paired for 10 minutes to discuss potential collaborations. This dynamic was found to be effective for fostering new partnerships. The event concluded with an informal lunch, providing a more relaxed setting for participants to continue their conversations and strengthen connections.

Overall, the significance of the event lies in its ability to facilitate the exchange of ideas, the creation of new alliances, and the promotion of practical learning among social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Following the event, several project collaborations emerged, with some initiatives even submitting joint grant applications.

9.1.6. Transnational activities

We did 2 international activities in the GRESODI project.

For the first time, teams from the three participating countries will come together in a dynamic, collaborative online event, to:

- Get to know one another and explore each other's mission and work,
- Present the current stage of their projects,
- Gain new insights through a presentation and interactive workshops,
- Take part in a video competition, with the winning team earning the opportunity to join a study visit abroad within the project region.

1. occasion: 26. June 2025 – online via zoom (4 hours)

In this occasion 30 people participated. The Joint Transnational Activity held on June 26, 2025, was designed to offer a rich learning experience, facilitate interactive knowledge exchange, and strengthen international collaboration. Programs: keynote presentation by Dominik Freinhofer: *"Using Generative AI to develop best practices and support social enterprises"*; Co-Creation Workshop with participants from Austria, Hungary, and Spain, using SWOT analysis and problem tree methodology to develop policy recommendations; Workshop summaries and reflections by the moderators.

The Co-Creation Workshop took place with participants from Austria, Hungary, and Spain. At this point of the online event, three breakout rooms were created via the ZOOM online conferencing platform, allowing participants from the three countries to join the workshop in separate breakout rooms. The goal of the collaborative work was for participants to become familiar with each other's projects and to engage in a co-creation process — a unique opportunity for collective thinking and cross-border exchange of experience.

AUSTRIA

In the discussion of the Austrian group, participants emphasised the **ongoing barriers in funding access**, especially for early-stage and rural social enterprises, and the need for low-threshold instruments that reflect real start-up conditions. They also underlined the **importance of embedding social entrepreneurship in education**, beginning already in schools, to foster entrepreneurial skills from an early age.

Digitalisation was perceived as both an opportunity and a challenge, with the group pointing to the need for accessible and affordable digital tools adapted to the needs of small ventures. The Austrian group's final key insight was their call for more **transparent and easy-to-understand impact measurement frameworks**. This included the idea of a **unified 'Impact Score' for each of the three sustainability dimensions**: social, ecological and economic.

HUNGARY

The Hungarian group structured their input around five pillars: regulation (e.g. direct contracting with certified employers), finance (preferential treatment for social enterprises), education (tailored training and mentoring), employment and CSR (engaging youth through internships and volunteering), and visibility (raising public awareness through media and storytelling).

SPAIN

The catalan group discussion was framed around several key topics. On strategy, the conversation highlighted an urgent need to shift from a survival mindset to one of transformation, proposing a national coordinating body for joint advocacy. This tied into financial concerns, namely the heavy dependence on grants and the difficulties smaller projects face in accessing funds. A crucial point was the need to better balance social mission with economic sustainability. Regarding training, a demand for practical skills in finance and strategy was evident, alongside a proposal to create a "social freelancer" label. In the rural and digital sphere, the debate concluded that the primary challenge is not technological but relational, focusing on the difficulty for newcomers to integrate into close-knit community networks. Finally, the discussion on impact measurement stressed the need for simple, shared indicators to make meaningful comparisons.

By the end of the workshop, a SWOT analysis and problem tree were created. Policy proposals were also formulated in 7 areas: regulation and strategy, financing and financial instruments, education and knowledge sharing, digitalization, visibility and quality management, impact measurement and green transition.

The ideas expressed at the workshop were incorporated into the final white paper to support future strategies, policy development, and the strengthening of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem across borders.

2. occasion: 7 July 2025 – online via Zoom (2,5 hours)

Number of participants: 34

The aim of the transnational online event held on July 2, 2025, was for selected social enterprises and projects from the three countries participating in the GRESODI program to present their completed pitch videos, with which they are participating

in the video pitch competition. This provided an opportunity to learn about each other's work, promote the exchange of experiences, and foster inspiration.

Program: Welcome speech, then a presentation from Mihai Palimariciuc, Project Officer of the EaSI Programme, whose talk focused on the EaSI Programme and its goals in supporting social innovation in Europe.

A **3-5 minute video presentation of the 15 incubated projects** was held with live simultaneous interpretation, beginning with the pitch videos from the **Hungarian projects** participating in the GRESODI program.

The project **Borzongó** was presented, focusing on community-based local tourism development to improve the quality of life for residents of Bábonymbérc and promote the integration of the district.

A video introduced the renewal of the business model, visibility, and social impact of the **Miskolci Zöld Kosár Közösség**, a regional social enterprise working for sustainable development.

A film was screened about the **CASE Összefogás a Társadalmi Vállalkozások Fejlődéséért Egyesület**, which was established in response to the isolation, lack of resources, and operational challenges faced by social enterprises. The association addresses the problem of limited networking and information flow among social enterprises that rely heavily on their own resources.

The **Tű, cérna, szeretet** sewing room in Miskolc was showcased through a video, highlighting its launch, activities, and goals.

The **Vidéki Logika Egyesület**'s introduction film featured the *Rejtelmes sziget* program, which focuses on the important social issue of the weakening connection between younger generations and nature.

Following this, the **Austrian projects** were also presented via video:

Dualify is a platform focused on enhancing dual education apprenticeships by improving digital communication between apprentices, schools, and companies, aiming to provide practical experience alongside theoretical learning.

Entropia offers a software solution that optimizes the operation of district heating systems using AI-based forecasts, digital twins, and predictive control, increasing efficiency by up to 20%, reducing costs and co2-emissions.

Monstory is a digital storytelling platform designed for children aged 5 to 12, enabling them to express creativity and build communication skills through an intuitive, multilingual, and inclusive app.

Sustainable Events Academy provides online courses and resources to help event managers organize events with reduced carbon footprints and positive social

impact, aiming to scale sustainable event management across the German-speaking region and beyond.

sozKom Akademie is a strategic platform for value-based educational and innovation projects. It consolidates internal expertise into impactful offerings for external audiences. Early outcomes include a learning institute for children with learning difficulties, keynote speeches promoting human values and a positive future outlook, and the podcast "Sternklar – Menschen | Werte | Führung," which highlights social values, societal topics, and bold perspectives.

After a short **10-minute break**, the pitch videos of the **Spanish projects** were also presented.

Agalla produces natural, biodegradable detergents by reusing local olive oil no longer fit for consumption, promoting sustainable cleaning products.

Argelaga is a community-led project by LGTBIQA+ and neurodivergent people, transforming social and institutional spaces to be inclusive and combat exclusion and ableism.

La Recolectora offers ethnobotanical workshops connecting people to nature through medicinal plants, wild edibles, and natural cosmetics, fostering ecological awareness and traditional knowledge.

MonViu promotes critical thinking and ecosystem awareness in education using mindfulness, Forum Theatre, and gamification, aiming to inspire youth amid today's complex crises.

Sequoiacoop is a social housing cooperative that also runs community initiatives like artisanal baking, community gardens, and cultural activities, expanding membership to deepen social and ecological impact in the Vall del Ges and Osona region.

After the videos were shown, the voting process took place via a Google Form, where voters – limited to team members – selected their three favorite projects from other countries (not their own), with only one vote allowed per startup. The voting was anonymous to ensure accountability.

The video competition was won by the Rejtelmes sziget, second place went to Món viu, and third place went to Zöld Kosár. The first two winners were unable to travel due to lack of time.

9.2 Best practices

Best practices identified during the incubation process

AUSTRIA

A central element in Austria was the **diagnostic coaching framework**, which structured the individual mentoring of the start-ups. Each venture began with a comprehensive assessment across ten key fields, ranging from **impact model to financial planning and team structure**. The same framework was applied again in a final diagnostic session after twelve months. This systematic approach not only documented the progress of each enterprise but also gave participants a clear reference point for their own development.

Another successful element were the Jour Fixe sessions with local role models. Entrepreneurs such as Sonnenschmiede GmbH and Purkarthofer Eis shared their experiences with the cohort in open dialogue. This format provided participants with **authentic insights into entrepreneurial challenges such as scaling, governance, and market positioning**. Feedback confirmed that hearing directly from peers who had already navigated similar paths was among the most valuable aspects of the programme.

The Meet & Greet 2024 in Graz represented a third best practice. By bringing together incubated ventures, alumni, ecosystem stakeholders, and international partners, the event created visibility for the Austrian teams and positioned them within a wider network. The combination of start-up presentations and **informal networking** proved effective in strengthening confidence, building connections, and opening up prospects for cooperation beyond the immediate programme.

Finally, the **integration of AI tools into the training agenda** stands out as an innovative element. The workshops led by Michael Freidl and Dominic Freinhofer introduced participants to the use of generative AI in social business practice, covering both applications and ethical considerations. This gave start-ups early exposure to digital tools that are likely to shape entrepreneurial practice in the coming years and ensured that impact-oriented ventures could explore these technologies in a responsible and constructive way.

HUNGARY

In Hungary, the following good practices were implemented during the incubation process:

- the six suitable training courses implemented became accredited adult training with curriculum,
- in the case of vouchers, the participating social enterprises could make suggestions for its content,
- we combined training and mentoring in the process, thus ensuring continuous feedback
- we used evaluation built into the process.

SPAIN

- Fostering visibility and networking: The program actively facilitated networking opportunities, allowing the incubated enterprises to meet one another and connect with public administration, thereby increasing their visibility.
- Use of a voucher system for digital tools: The strategy of offering vouchers to procure digital services (like websites, videos, or AI training) was a success and allowed projects to choose the tools they most needed.
- Practical methodology and personalized support: The technical sessions were based on a theoretical-practical model, focused on the direct use and application of tools to ensure projects achieved tangible outcomes. Additionally, a significant space was reserved in each session to delve into each participant's reality, allowing them to explain and seek solutions for their specific cases.

9.3 Challenges

Challenges faced and how they were addressed.

AUSTRIA

Despite the positive experiences and successful outcomes of the incubation, several challenges became visible in Austria. These challenges are important to acknowledge, as they highlight structural barriers that can hinder the development of social enterprises.

One case was the **dropout of Pflegedeutsch** in February 2025. While the venture had initially engaged actively, it became clear during the incubation year that the project could not be continued. The decision reflected the fragility of early-stage initiatives, particularly when they depend heavily on a single founder and face difficulties in mobilising sufficient time and resources.

Although regrettable, this case also demonstrated the value of incubation as an early testing ground: it allowed the entrepreneur to assess feasibility before investing further.

A broader and more persistent issue was the **difficulty of accessing suitable funding and balancing resource constraints**. Many Austrian incubated start-ups found it challenging to secure external financial support that matched their stage of development. Public funding programmes were often perceived as too bureaucratic, while private investment rarely considered early-stage social ventures. At the same time, several founders had to balance the demands of incubation with their everyday income-generating activities, which created time pressure and at times limited their capacity to engage fully.

Finally, a challenge specific to the Austrian cohort was the **mindset barrier around financial sustainability and profit-making**. For some participants, the idea that social enterprises can generate profit while addressing societal problems was entirely new. A (hidden) impression existed that “getting rich” might not be compatible with social entrepreneurship, as it seemed to contrast with the traditional charity model they were more familiar with. This perception sometimes slowed the process of developing scalable and market-oriented business models.

HUNGARY

Since some of the social enterprises participating in the program work full-time elsewhere, it is more difficult to organize meetings with them. It is more difficult for them to participate in training and events, and they have to take time off. This long-term incubation has many advantages due to its diversity, but at the same time it requires a lot of time, which they have to solve. This type of project requires great flexibility from the organizations. There would also have been a demand from the organizations that, in addition to the various forms of learning and cooperation, there would have been a larger communication package, which would have helped the visibility of the organizations within the framework of the project. For digital vouchers, it was a challenge to find and select the right service providers (short film maker, marketing training). There was an organization where voucher fulfilment was quick and then maintaining motivation for the organization was a challenge.

SPAIN

Several key challenges were identified during the incubation process. A primary issue was the heterogeneity of the projects; the significant difference in maturity and organizational level among participants made it difficult for the training and methodologies to be 100% relevant to everyone. The curriculum was especially suitable for projects in advanced stages but less so for those still in the ideation phase. Another area noted for improvement was the insufficient support for economic sustainability. Participants felt that the guidance on economic viability needed much more development.

Many of the startups required more intensive support in business planning and accessing investment, while also fostering an honest analysis that allows for adapting or rethinking the project if its viability is not clear.

Finally, as happened in the other incubation programs, a challenge was the difficulty participants had in balancing the program with their other commitments. Entrepreneurs found it complicated to manage the daily operations of their projects with the time dedicated to learning and skill improvement within the incubator. This was particularly true for those who were also juggling full-time jobs, which made the continuity of their participation a significant challenge.

9.4. Conclusion of GRESODI incubation process

AUSTRIA

The Austrian incubation programme successfully demonstrated that early-stage social enterprises can achieve substantial progress within a structured and supportive environment. Five ventures — Entropia, Monstory, Sustainable Events Academy, Dualify, and SozKom Akademie — completed the process, while one additional project (Pflegedeutsch) used the incubation as a testing ground before discontinuing.

A key strength of the programme was the **diagnostic coaching framework**, which enabled systematic tracking of development from the initial assessment to the final diagnostic after twelve months. This created transparency and accountability while also motivating start-ups by making their progress visible. **Complementary trainings in sales, marketing, finance, and digitalisation** — including early exposure to AI applications — further strengthened the ventures' practical capacities. **Networking formats** such as the Meet & Greet 2024 expanded their reach and embedded them more firmly within the Styrian social business ecosystem.

At the same time, the programme revealed important insights into the typical starting position of Austrian social entrepreneurs. Many founders entered the incubation already **well-versed in their thematic field**, with clear motivation and promising ideas. What was often missing, however, were **sector-specific ecosystems and structured business model competences**. These were largely built up during the incubation itself, showing that programmes of this kind can play a decisive role in bridging the gap between thematic expertise and entrepreneurial viability.

Another central lesson concerned the **mindset towards profit and financial sustainability**. For several participants, the notion that it is acceptable — and indeed necessary — to earn money as a social entrepreneur was new. The incubation helped to create awareness that generating profit not only aligns with solving societal problems but also provides the **freedom and independence** required to innovate and scale. This change in perspective was essential in enabling the ventures to design business models that balance social mission with economic viability.

Overall, the Austrian incubation can be considered a **successful pilot** that combined structured coaching, forward-looking training, and ecosystem integration. It not only strengthened the immediate capacities of the participating start-ups but also offered insights into how to better support the next generation of social entrepreneurs in Austria: by building stronger ecosystems, deepening business competences, and fostering a culture that recognises profit as a legitimate driver of social innovation.

HUNGARY

The Hungarian incubation programme proved that a **mentor-focused and practice-oriented process** can effectively support the growth of social enterprises at various stages of development. Combining the **Impact Lab, three-day Bootcamp**, and a **six-part training series**, participants refined their ideas into concrete development plans that integrated green and digital elements.

The **mentoring framework** was a key strength: each organisation went through diagnostic, mid-term, and final sessions, ensuring progress tracking and tailored guidance. The parallel **voucher scheme** enabled social enterprises to test and apply digital solutions directly relevant to their operations, while the training content evolved into an **accredited adult-learning programme**, extending the project's long-term impact.

A **hybrid networking event in Miskolc** gave visibility to the incubated ventures and strengthened regional partnerships. Main challenges included participants' limited time availability and the difficulty of finding reliable digital service providers, both mitigated through flexible delivery and close mentoring. Overall, the Hungarian incubation resulted in stronger business models, improved strategic thinking, and better market readiness. It established practical tools — diagnostic mentoring, accredited training, and digital vouchers — that can serve as **sustainable models** for future national and regional programmes.

SPAIN

The Spanish incubation, coordinated **by FACTO** Coop, successfully supported a diverse group of social enterprises through a **hands-on**, flexible approach combining workshops, mentoring, and peer learning. Structured around three themes — Green Economy, Digitalization, and Social Communication — the programme helped participants align social impact with business sustainability and digital transformation.

The **bootcamp and mentoring** sessions encouraged experiential learning through tools such as the Social Business Canvas and Impact Journey. Participants received personalised feedback on financial sustainability, communication, and digitalisation, while the **digital voucher** scheme allowed direct application of new tools. The **networking event in Barcelona**, held with Barcelona Activa, fostered visibility and collaboration, resulting in new partnerships and even joint funding applications.

Main challenges included the **diversity of maturity levels** among participants and difficulties in balancing programme commitments with other responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Spanish incubation succeeded in building confidence, improving entrepreneurial skills, and embedding green and digital dimensions in local projects. It stands out as a **replicable model** for community-based, adaptive support to social enterprises within Spain's social economy ecosystem.

10. Policy recommendations



Disclaimer

This document has been prepared by the project partners and reflects their views only. It does not represent the views or position of the European Commission, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

The Project

The GRESODI project – *Green, Social and Digital transition via local impact ventures* – was launched under the EU's ESF+ programme to strengthen the role of social enterprises in driving sustainable, inclusive, and digitally enabled local development.

Between 2023 and 2025, GRESODI supported **five social enterprises in each partner country** (Austria, Hungary, Spain) through a comprehensive incubation process. This included **Impact Labs, Bootcamps, mentoring**, and the use of **green and digital vouchers** that enabled participants to test and implement innovative solutions. In addition, a **training programme on social enterprise management** was delivered to build the managerial and strategic capacities of participating organisations.

Policy makers were engaged at national and international levels through dedicated meetings and workshops, ensuring that the final recommendations reflect both practice-based experiences and policy dialogue.

The Partnership

GRESODI was coordinated by the **HÁRFA Foundation (Hungary)** as lead partner, in collaboration with: **FACTO (Spain), Social Business Hub Styria (Austria), EX ANTE (Hungary)**.

This transnational partnership combined practical incubation expertise, training, policy engagement, and analytical capacity, laying the foundation for the policy recommendations presented in this document.

About the White Paper

This document forms part of the **GRESODI White Paper**, which consolidates the project's findings and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the social enterprise ecosystem. The White Paper draws on the experiences of the incubation programmes, the results of national and international policy maker meetings, and the lessons learned from project implementation. Its aim is to serve as both a **strategic guide** for policymakers and a **practical resource** for social entrepreneurs and support organisations, ensuring that the outcomes of the GRESODI project continue to generate impact beyond its lifetime.

Process of Developing the Recommendations

The analysis carried out in the GRESODI project revealed several systemic challenges and opportunities for social enterprises across Austria, Hungary, and Spain. In response, a set of policy recommendations was formulated to guide decision-makers, support organisations, and practitioners in strengthening the ecosystem for social enterprises.

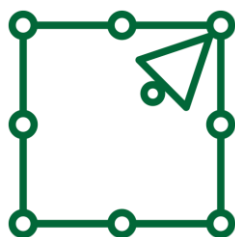
These recommendations address the most pressing structural issues – from fragmented legal frameworks and financial constraints to the lack of impact measurement and digital readiness. They also highlight the enabling factors that can accelerate the sector's contribution to Europe's green, social, and digital transitions.

The proposals are based on a broad evidence base: national policy makers' meetings held in autumn 2024 in all three partner countries, the results of the international workshop, and the practical experiences gained throughout the project implementation. The White Paper and the recommendations also integrate the key insights from three transnational peer-learning sessions, held within the GRESODI project framework.

In late September and early October 2025, the recommendations were discussed once more with policymakers to validate and refine them.

Following this final consultation, the recommendations will be published in English and in all partner languages to ensure accessibility and dissemination at national level. The final version will be made available to policymakers, support organizations, researchers, and social entrepreneurs to inform decision-making and strengthen the social enterprise ecosystem. It is recommended to transform the policy recommendations into concrete, implementable action plans in partnership with relevant stakeholders in each country, including clear responsibilities, timelines, expected outcomes, and the necessary financial resources

The following table provides a concise overview of the key recommendations, structured thematically. This summary serves as a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders, while the subsequent sections of the chapter provide detailed explanations and country-specific insights.



Thematic Area



Recommendations

<p>10.1 Strategic approach, regulation and coordination</p>	<p>10.1.1. Dedicated policy responsibility and governmental anchoring</p> <p>10.1.2. National social economy strategy and legal recognition</p> <p>10.1.3. Alignment with European regulatory models and standards</p> <p>10.1.4. Integrate of SEs into mainstream economic development policies</p> <p>10.1.5. Regionalization, decentralization, and local level learning</p> <p>10.1.6. Regional SE hubs and territorial integration into local development strategies</p>
<p>10.2 Financial support and incentives</p>	<p>10.2.1. Dedicated and simplified funding schemes for SEs</p> <p>10.2.2. Improve access to impact investing, microfinance, and blended finance</p> <p>10.2.3. Strengthen ESG incentives and corporate engagement with SEs</p> <p>10.2.4. Facilitate outsourcing of public services to SEs</p> <p>10.2.5. Introduce targeted tax and utility incentives for SEs</p> <p>10.2.6. Introduce service voucher schemes as flexible financial instruments</p>

<p>10.3 Education, training, and knowledge sharing</p>	<p>10.3.1. Integrate structured training programs into existing education systems</p> <p>10.3.2. Embed knowledge-sharing within existing national support platforms</p> <p>10.3.3. Support and disseminate existing best practice guides and training modules</p> <p>10.3.4. Encourage partnerships between educational institutions and SEs</p>
<p>10.4 Digitalization and access to digital solutions</p>	<p>10.4.1. Integrate SEs into national digital literacy and skills programs</p> <p>10.4.2. Promote digital and relational inclusion in rural and disadvantaged areas</p> <p>10.4.3. Support SEs in adopting digital business models</p> <p>10.4.4. Facilitate access to existing digital platforms and ecosystems</p> <p>10.4.5. Recognize digital work opportunities to improve labor market access</p>
<p>10.5 Visibility, market integration</p>	<p>10.5.1. Strengthen SE visibility on mainstream marketplaces and business networks</p> <p>10.5.2. Develop branding and marketing support initiatives, including partnerships with influencers and media campaigns</p> <p>10.5.3. Support partnerships between SEs and corporates through existing networks and targeted incentives</p>
<p>10.6 Labelling and quality management</p>	<p>10.6.1. Implement certification, labelling, and quality management frameworks</p> <p>10.6.2. Support voluntary participation in international SE labelling initiatives to</p>

	<p>foster credibility and cross-border cooperation</p> <p>10.6.3. Provide training and capacity-building programs on quality assurance, impact measurement, and sustainable business practices</p>
10.7 Impact measurement and policy effectiveness	<p>10.7.1. Support the adoption of flexible, SE-driven impact measurement approaches aligned with international standards</p> <p>10.7.2. Help SEs identify and use relevant, proportionate impact metrics based on existing international standards</p> <p>10.7.3. Introduce incentive-based funding linked to measurable outcomes</p> <p>10.7.4. Support voluntary, transparent impact reporting through practical tools and guidance</p> <p>10.7.5. Develop long-term monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems for SE policies and funding</p>
10.8 Green and sustainable transition	<p>10.8.1. Open existing green incentives to SEs and support sustainability-oriented transformation</p> <p>10.8.2. Support SEs in integrating sustainability into operations through ESG alignment and circular economy practices</p> <p>10.8.3. Expand access to green funding and investment opportunities for SEs</p>

10.1. Strategic approach, regulation and coordination

10.1.1. Dedicated policy responsibility and governmental anchoring

Social enterprises often operate in fragmented policy environments, which undermines coherence and long-term planning. Establishing a dedicated governmental responsibility – through a ministry, agency, or clearly mandated unit – ensures a political home, systematic data collection, and stronger advocacy for SEs. Such institutional anchoring creates policy consistency, guarantees that SEs are included in new reforms, and signals lasting state commitment. International practice shows that clear anchoring builds trust and helps mobilize EU and international resources effectively.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No dedicated unit currently exists; the priority is to establish one to overcome fragmentation.
- **Austria:** A dedicated responsibility is already in place; the focus should be on strengthening coordination and maximizing effectiveness.
- **Spain:** Responsibilities are fragmented across regions and government levels; the priority is to build coordination mechanisms and common roadmaps.

10.1.2. National social business strategy and legal recognition

A national social economy strategy is essential to provide predictability and legitimacy for SEs. It should include legal recognition, funding mechanisms adapted to their hybrid nature, and operational support such as training, advisory services, and networking. A comprehensive strategy must also include measurable objectives and awareness-raising actions, ensuring SEs are visible to the public, investors, and policymakers. By embedding SEs into mainstream economic planning, such a strategy elevates their role as key actors in inclusive and sustainable growth.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No national strategy exists; priorities include clarifying legal definitions and addressing practical issues such as contracting alternatives to the rehabilitation tax, VAT treatment, and utility pricing.
- **Austria:** A strategy already exists; refinement should focus on monitoring, evaluation, and fine-tuning implementation.
- **Spain:** Regional strategies exist in Catalonia and the Basque Country driven by the maturity of their SEs economic network; scaling up these

approaches to the State's level, with a coherent national strategy, is needed alongside the impulse of other regions to spread the impact.

10.1.3. Alignment with European regulatory models and standards

Aligning national frameworks with successful European practices provides clarity, stability, and credibility for SEs. Good practices include registration systems that guarantee legitimacy, targeted financial support, and clear recognition of hybrid organizational forms. Harmonization with European standards facilitates cross-border cooperation, improves comparability, and attracts international funding. It also reduces administrative burdens by creating predictable procedures and strengthens international credibility of SEs. Possible action can be to introduce an independent legal form for social enterprises, inspired by international models such as the *Benefit Corporation*. This would provide clear legal identity, visibility, and tailored benefits, while ensuring accountability and long-term commitment to social impact. The Slovak example shows the risk of creating a purely formal registry — many organisations registered only to access specific funding opportunities, without genuine commitment to social impact. Any new legal form should therefore include robust eligibility and monitoring mechanisms to prevent misuse and ensure credibility.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Should adapt models like Slovakia's, where SEs are registered, monitored, and supported by dedicated schemes. In addition, exploring a dedicated SE legal form (Benefit Corporation-type) could provide recognition and attract impact investors — provided that safeguards are in place to avoid misuse as seen in Slovakia.
- **Austria:** Many elements are already in place; the priority is refining standards and piloting advanced tools such as unified impact measurement.
- **Spain:** National-level alignment with EU standards and modular regional delivery: single registry, unified impact metrics, and tailored digital support by regional maturity.

10.1.4. Integration of SEs into mainstream economic development policies

SEs must not remain marginal projects but should be embedded in national economic development strategies. This means access to mainstream business support schemes, infrastructure, and funding, and recognition of their contributions to employment, innovation, and sustainability. Integration fosters synergies between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental goals. It also normalizes the idea of businesses with a social purpose, encouraging partnerships with corporates, universities, and

municipalities. Ensure that national SME development programs, funding instruments, and innovation infrastructures explicitly include SEs, providing equal access while also allowing for targeted incentives.

Encourage mainstream incubators, accelerators, and clusters to integrate SE-specific modules.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** SEs are often supported only as isolated projects; integration into broader national policies is urgently needed.
- **Austria:** Integration is more advanced; further strengthening their role in the green and digital transition is a key step.
- **Spain:** SEs have proven they can scale proven models to address mainstream challenges; to keep growing and addressing other challenges it's required, clear, visible political commitment. Additionally, unlock access to general funding and infrastructure, and enable competitive public contracts through smaller, right-sized lots.

10.1.5. Regionalization, decentralization and local-level learning

Regionalization allows support measures to reflect diverse local realities instead of a one-size-fits-all model. Decentralization empowers municipalities and regional actors to provide targeted incentives such as incubation, vouchers, or co-working spaces. Comparative studies of impact models across regions and countries help adapt policies effectively. Local-level mentoring, peer learning, and practice-based workshops can accelerate professionalization and reduce fragmentation. This multi-level governance approach creates resilience and strengthens citizen engagement.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Strong territorial inequalities make regional good practices and knowledge transfer particularly important.
- **Austria:** Regions such as Styria show how vibrant SE ecosystems can emerge; these examples should be scaled and replicated.
- **Spain:** Regional differentiation is essential: tailor instruments to industrial ecosystems in the Basque Country and service-heavy co-ops in Catalonia and Madrid, while redesigning metrics (beyond “number of attendees”) so rural areas are not penalized against large metropolitan hubs.

10.1.6. Regional SE hubs and territorial integration into local development strategies

Establishing dedicated social enterprise hubs should be a core element of national and regional strategies. These hubs must provide not only physical infrastructure – such as offices, co-working spaces, and workshops – but also a full package of support services, including incubation, mentoring, financial advisory, and capacity-building programs. Their role is to serve as visible, accessible anchor points for early-stage and growing SEs.

Beyond direct support, hubs should act as connectors – linking SEs with local governments, universities, companies, and mainstream economic development actors. This enables social enterprises to embed themselves in broader territorial strategies and participate in public-private partnerships.

While hubs are the central support structure for SEs, they should also be integrated with existing incubators, accelerators, and SME development services to avoid fragmentation. Feeding impact data into national systems, hubs contribute to evidence-based policymaking and can serve as models for replication across regions.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** New hubs are needed to fill gaps and support SEs with training, mentoring, incubation services, and visibility.
- **Austria:** Existing hubs should be strengthened, with more networking, knowledge transfer, and incubation opportunities across regions. Currently there exist only 3 dedicated SE Hubs in 9 federal states
- **Spain:** Require SE expertise in regional hub advisory roles, establish dedicated SE incubation tracks, and embed SE metrics and procurement models into local development strategies, while strengthening narratives, communication tools, and community anchoring.

10.2 Financial support and incentives

10.2.1. Dedicated and simplified funding schemes for SEs

Social enterprises often face difficulties accessing mainstream funding due to their hybrid nature and smaller scale. Dedicated schemes are needed that respond to their specific needs while avoiding over-bureaucratization. These should combine early-stage grants with instruments that encourage long-term self-sufficiency, such as matching funds or revenue-based support.

Simplified application and reporting processes are essential, particularly for micro-enterprises and rural initiatives. Such schemes should also address female-led and youth-led ventures, which often lack access to traditional financial instruments.

Long-term predictability is key: SEs must be able to plan beyond project cycles, and funding should encourage innovation rather than compliance with rigid templates. Ultimately, dedicated and simplified schemes ensure that SEs can focus their resources on impact creation instead of administrative survival.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Dedicated SE funding is scarce and highly bureaucratic; schemes should prioritize simplicity and transparency.
- **Austria:** Early-stage SEs need more targeted support, even though the ecosystem is mature; reducing bureaucracy and gaining access to the market is a main priority.
- **Spain:** Many initiatives depend too much on subsidies; ecosystem-wide funding for infrastructure and services, not just individual projects, should be emphasized. Including system alert KPIs like the “subsidies exposure” could be useful too.

10.2.2. Improve access to impact investing, microfinance, and blended finance

Beyond grants, social enterprises (SEs) require access to a diverse set of financial instruments to grow and professionalize. Impact investing provides capital linked to measurable outcomes, while microfinance addresses the needs of very small ventures. Blended finance models, which combine public and private resources, can reduce risk for investors and expand opportunities for SEs.

Governments should also introduce positive discrimination and targeted financial instruments to support SEs within broader SME financing frameworks. This could include dedicated financial incentives, preferential access to public funding, or tailored risk-sharing mechanisms. Such measures would acknowledge the additional social value these organizations create and compensate for their often-higher operational constraints.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider the entire lifecycle of social enterprises when designing financial and developmental support schemes. While many existing tools focus on the startup or early-stage phase, more attention should be paid to mature SEs seeking consolidation or growth.

Addressing their needs ensures that impactful initiatives do not stall due to a lack of scale-up capital or strategic support.

Governments should work with financial institutions to design products tailored to SE realities, ensuring affordability and inclusiveness. Training in financial literacy and investment readiness should accompany these measures. Creating dedicated impact funds or guarantee schemes can attract private capital into the sector. By broadening the financing toolbox and recognizing the unique nature of social enterprises, SEs can move from fragile, subsidy-dependent models toward more sustainable and innovative growth paths.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Financial institutions rarely offer products tailored to SEs; blended finance and guarantee schemes would open access.
- **Austria:** Impact investing is slowly growing, but awareness among SEs remains limited; awareness training and matchmaking with investors is needed.
- **Spain:** Venture capital is relatively accessible in Catalonia, but not for SE initiatives. Unlock SE growth with tailored impact funds, blended public-private finance, and scalable microcredit—dodging venture capital logic and supporting innovative, mission-driven models.

10.2.3. Strengthen ESG incentives and corporate engagement with SEs

Large companies can be key partners for social enterprises (SEs), contributing not only financial resources but also networks, expertise, and market access. However, current collaborations are often ad hoc and limited to short-term CSR initiatives.

To promote more strategic and sustainable partnerships, public policy should introduce targeted ESG incentives for corporates that actively engage with SEs. These could include:

- Additional evaluation points in public procurement when SEs are included in supply chains
- Tax relief or deductions for goods and services purchased from SEs
- Public-private co-investment schemes, where corporate funding for SE development is matched by public contributions
- Social impact certification mechanisms that enhance ESG ratings and non-financial reporting of corporates
- Recognition of corporate volunteering and skill-sharing programs, especially when aligned with SE capacity building

The goal is to move beyond transactional relationships and create long-term, value-driven collaborations, where SEs are recognized as professional and mission-aligned partners.

Such incentives help normalize SE engagement across sectors, enhance the credibility and market positioning of SEs, and support the broader transition to a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Companies show growing interest in CSR, but partnerships remain ad hoc; stronger ESG incentives would stabilize collaborations.
- **Austria:** Corporate–SE engagement is yet underdeveloped; the focus is on creating ways to foster these partnerships and embedding them in ESG reporting.
- **Spain:** Fragmentation limits SE visibility to corporates; matchmaking platforms and communication tools are needed to foster partnerships.

10.2.4. Facilitate outsourcing of public services to SEs

Governments can play a central role by outsourcing certain public services to social enterprises, particularly in areas where they already operate effectively such as employment services, care, recycling, or community development. Outsourcing provides SEs with stable revenue streams, while ensuring that public funds generate social as well as economic returns.

To make this work, public procurement rules should be adapted to explicitly recognize the added social value of SEs, going beyond lowest price criteria. Preferential access or positive discrimination mechanisms may be required, especially to support smaller or emerging SEs. Framework contracts, multi-year agreements, and simplified procedures can make outsourcing more accessible and predictable for SEs.

One critical step is to embed SE eligibility and advantages directly into public procurement and service delivery regulations, offering them clearer opportunities to compete for contracts while maintaining fairness. Transparency and accountability mechanisms should accompany such contracts to maintain trust and demonstrate impact.

National or regional strategies should clearly define under which conditions SEs can access outsourcing opportunities and what kind of social results are expected. Without clear guidelines and a stable regulatory framework, there is a risk that formal SE status could be misused by actors interested only in funding opportunities, as seen in some country examples.

By positioning SEs as trusted partners in delivering public services, governments reinforce both sustainability and social impact, while also tapping into local knowledge, inclusive employment practices, and community-rooted innovation.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Outsourcing is rarely practiced, but direct contracting could also replace rehabilitation tax payments and incentivize SE employment models.
- **Austria:** Outsourcing is already present in certain sectors; clearer frameworks and long-term agreements could scale this practice.
- **Spain:** Develop national guidelines for public contracts with SEs, standardize smaller lot sizes, and implement transparent monitoring for consistent, impactful outsourcing.

10.2.5. Introduce targeted tax and utility incentives for SEs

Social enterprises often operate under financial constraints that are not adequately reflected in current tax and utility frameworks. While pursuing social and environmental goals, they are typically treated as regular for-profit entities in terms of cost structures — which undermines their competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

To level the playing field and recognize their added value, governments should go beyond eliminating disadvantages and introduce positive incentives, such as:

- Reduced VAT rates for SE services or products
- Exemptions or rebates on utility tariffs for registered SEs
- Local tax relief (e.g., on business or property taxes) based on social performance
- Access to public infrastructure at discounted rates (e.g., coworking, workshops)

Such incentives must be based on transparent and verifiable criteria, linked to impact measurement or certification systems, to prevent misuse and ensure that benefits reach genuine SEs.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Utility pricing and VAT on subsidized services are concrete obstacles; regulatory changes could provide immediate relief.
- **Austria:** Only a very small number of non-profit oriented SEs benefit from some favorable schemes; improved measurement and research on produced impact should give arguments for further support in terms of reduced rates for taxes or wage-related costs

- **Spain:** Spain's cooperative tax regime already strengthens SEs by reducing corporate tax and mandating reserves for reinvestment and education. Additional steps—like discounted utility tariffs and targeted VAT relief—could further level the playing field for mission-driven enterprises.

10.2.6. Introduce service voucher schemes as flexible financial instruments

Service vouchers can serve as a highly flexible and user-friendly financial instrument for supporting social enterprises. Unlike traditional grants, vouchers allow beneficiaries to directly select and tailor the services they need most, such as training, mentoring, or advisory support. This demand-driven approach improves efficiency by matching resources with real needs and stimulating a competitive market for quality services. Vouchers also reduce administrative burdens, as they are easier to distribute and redeem than complex project-based grants. They foster transparency by linking public spending to specific, verifiable services. Importantly, voucher systems empower SEs and their staff to take ownership of their development process. Over time, vouchers can create a dynamic ecosystem where SEs, service providers, and policymakers collaborate more effectively. As a tested tool, vouchers complement other funding instruments and offer governments a scalable and impactful option for supporting social enterprises.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Voucher schemes were piloted during GRESODI (e.g. adult training vouchers), proving their effectiveness; scaling them up nationally would be a natural next step.
- **Austria:** Similar mechanisms exist in other sectors (e.g. training vouchers); adapting them to SEs would be feasible and well-aligned with current policy instruments.
- **Spain:** Regional diversity makes vouchers particularly suitable, as they provide flexibility and can be adapted to different local ecosystems without losing national coherence.

10.3.1. Integrate structured training programs into existing education systems

Social entrepreneurs need not only passion and commitment but also solid business and market skills. Structured training programs embedded in universities, vocational schools, and adult education institutions can provide these competences. Topics should include business planning, marketing, financial management, impact measurement, and digital skills, including AI. Programs must be tailored to different stages of maturity, from early-stage entrepreneurs to established SE managers. Practical, experiential learning – case studies, simulations, and mentorship – is more effective than purely theoretical approaches. Long-term integration of SE topics into curricula will normalize the idea of entrepreneurship with a social purpose.

Such programs also help build bridges between academia, the business world, and the social economy sector. Ultimately, education equips SEs to operate sustainably, attract funding, and scale their impact.

To ensure sustainability and coherence, SE-specific training should not be developed in isolation, but rather integrated into existing entrepreneurial and business education programs. Leveraging the capacity of established institutions – such as SME development centers, business faculties, or vocational education providers – helps embed social enterprise within the broader economic narrative, while avoiding fragmentation and duplication.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** SE-specific training is rare; integrating modules into universities and adult education could fill a critical gap.
- **Austria:** Some programs already exist; priority should be to expand them and include SE topics in mainstream curricula from earlier stages.
- **Spain:** Several universities offer practical social entrepreneurship programs, but SE-focused training remains limited in general and adult education.

10.3.2. Embed knowledge-sharing within existing national support platforms

Knowledge and experience are among the most valuable resources in the SE sector, yet they often remain siloed within organizations. A national knowledge-sharing platform could collect and disseminate case studies, methodologies, and tools. It should connect SEs with policymakers, researchers, and business experts, enabling dialogue and co-creation. Digital

platforms can lower access barriers, but personal events such as conferences and workshops are equally important. The platform should also facilitate peer-to-peer learning, allowing SEs to exchange lessons and avoid repeating mistakes. By serving as a repository of both successful and failed practices, the platform would accelerate sector-wide learning. Effective governance is crucial to maintain credibility and ensure that content remains practical and updated. Such platforms can also increase visibility and help attract investment by showcasing the sector's potential. However, rather than establishing entirely new digital platforms, existing national and regional enterprise development infrastructures (such as SME support portals, innovation hubs, and professional networks) should be leveraged to host and distribute SE-relevant knowledge. This approach avoids fragmentation and fosters closer integration between SEs and the broader business ecosystem.

What matters is not the novelty of the platform, but the quality, accessibility, and practical usability of the shared content – and ensuring that SEs across the country, including rural and underrepresented actors, can easily access and contribute to it.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No such platform exists; creating one would reduce fragmentation and support networking among dispersed actors.
- **Austria:** There are several independently developed networks on national and federal level; the focus should be on formally combining their activities under the roof of a national SE strategy
- **Spain:** Platforms exist at enterprise levels, and some at city or regional level; scaling them up and linking them across regions would provide consistency if we can bypass the individual logic with collective incentives.

10.3.3. Develop and adapt SE-specific best practice guides and training modules

Best practice guides and training modules provide accessible tools for capacity-building. They should focus on practical aspects such as SE business models, financial sustainability, and impact measurement. Modules need to be adapted to different levels: simple, hands-on tools for early-stage ventures and more advanced frameworks for mature SEs. These resources should be regularly updated to reflect emerging trends such as digital transformation or ESG requirements. Guides should include templates, checklists, and case examples to maximize usability. Distributing materials both online and offline ensures that rural and digitally less connected SEs also benefit. Such tools can be developed collaboratively with SEs, experts, and policymakers to ensure relevance. Ultimately, best practice resources provide a low-cost, high-impact way to raise sector-wide professionalism.

In addition, many high-quality resources already exist across Europe and within national ecosystems. Instead of duplicating efforts, public policy should focus on identifying, supporting, and adapting existing best practice materials, including those developed by social enterprise incubators, universities, networks, and EU-funded projects. Translating and distributing these resources widely – especially in local languages and accessible formats – can significantly boost the reach and impact of SE capacity-building, while saving time and public funding.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Toolkits and practice-based workshops are in demand; guides should be context-specific and translated into Hungarian.
- **Austria:** High-quality guides already exist; priority should be to systematize them and connect them to formal training programs.
- **Spain:** SEs need guides adapted to regional realities and languages; sharing templates and tools across regions (or even across public institutions within the same region) would strengthen consistency.

10.3.4. Encourage partnerships between educational institutions and SEs

Partnerships between SEs and educational institutions create opportunities for innovation and real-world problem-solving. Universities can act as laboratories for SE business models, offering students practical cases and internships. SEs can benefit from fresh perspectives, research support, and access to skilled graduates. Joint research projects can also produce evidence on the impact and effectiveness of SEs. These collaborations foster mutual learning, with academia contributing theory and SEs bringing practice. Involving SEs in teaching strengthens curricula and raises awareness of social entrepreneurship among students. Partnerships should also extend to secondary schools, introducing young people to SE concepts early. With the right incentives, these collaborations can become a permanent feature of the ecosystem, not just occasional projects.

To avoid duplication and maximize impact, public support should focus on scaling and strengthening existing partnerships, many of which are already active across Europe. These include university incubators working with SEs, dual education programs, and Erasmus+ projects with a social economy focus. Mapping and reinforcing such collaborations – rather than starting from scratch – allows for faster integration of social entrepreneurship into mainstream education, while respecting local contexts and institutional strengths.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Partnerships are weak; pilot projects linking universities and SEs could demonstrate benefits and build momentum.
- **Austria:** several connections already exist, particularly in research; scaling partnerships and embedding them in curricula would strengthen impact and improve the numbers of social entrepreneurs and related stakeholders.
- **Spain:** Collaborations are growing; expanding them nationally and across sectors could unlock considerable potential. Additionally, clearer internship pathways would further increase opportunities for students and SEs.

10.4. Digitalization and access to digital solutions

10.4.1. Integrate SEs into national digital literacy and skills programs

Digital literacy is essential for social enterprises (SEs) to remain competitive, access new markets, and operate efficiently. However, many SEs – especially those in rural areas or working with vulnerable groups – face barriers to digital adoption.

Rather than creating separate training systems, SEs should be explicitly included in national and regional digital skills programs targeting SMEs, with additional modules or support services tailored to their specific needs. Topics should go beyond basic IT to include digital marketing, e-commerce, CRM tools, data protection, and even the use of AI to optimise operations and impact measurement.

Training programs must ensure accessibility for small-scale and disadvantaged SEs through blended learning formats, mobile-first tools, and mentoring. Financial literacy – especially related to managing online transactions and digital platforms – should be part of the curriculum.

To ensure relevance, content should be co-designed with SEs, public institutions, and digital experts. The goal is not only to increase competence, but also to build confidence, reduce resistance, and normalise digitalisation in mission-driven enterprises.

By integrating SEs into existing digital skills frameworks, rather than building new ones, policy can foster inclusion, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Many SEs see digitalization as secondary; training must emphasize practical business value to increase uptake.
- **Austria:** A relatively high skill base exists; focus should be on advanced topics such as AI tools and strategic use of data.
- **Spain:** To expand digital skills uptake, programs should first address skepticism through SE-centric messaging and pedagogy, reframing digitalization and AI as allies, not adversaries.

10.4.2. Promote digital and relational inclusion in rural and disadvantaged areas

Expanding broadband and digital infrastructure is essential, but true digital transition in rural areas also requires addressing relational, cultural, and social barriers. Many communities lack not only infrastructure, but also trust in institutions, access to support networks, and confidence in using digital tools.

Policies should therefore combine technological upgrades with community-based inclusion efforts that foster local trust, digital literacy, and social cohesion. Tangible support should target disadvantaged groups, including women, the elderly, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and those with low formal education.

Public-private partnerships can accelerate infrastructure development, while local actors – including SEs themselves – can act as digital inclusion agents, offering mentoring, safe spaces for experimentation, and peer support.

Instead of building new facilities, existing public spaces such as libraries, community centers, and co-working hubs should be equipped and supported to function as local digital access points. Framing digitalisation as both a technological and social process helps prevent exclusion and reinforces resilience in rural development.

By empowering SEs as active participants in digital inclusion – not just passive beneficiaries – policy can unlock new pathways for innovation, local leadership, and equitable access to opportunity.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Infrastructure gaps remain, especially in rural areas; addressing them should go hand-in-hand with community engagement.
- **Austria:** Connectivity is strong, but relational integration of SEs in rural communities needs more attention.
- **Spain:** Digital transition in Spain's rural areas needs not only broadband, but also programs that build relationships, trust, and social cohesion—especially for newcomers and disadvantaged groups.

10.4.3. Support SEs in adopting digital business models

Digital business models offer social enterprises (SEs) significant opportunities to expand their reach, diversify revenue streams, and improve operational efficiency. This includes adopting e-commerce platforms, delivering services online, streamlining internal processes with CRM or ERP systems, and using data and digital tools for planning, monitoring, and storytelling.

Rather than developing stand-alone SE-specific programs, existing digitalisation support schemes for SMEs should be made explicitly inclusive of SEs, with adapted tools and mentoring for their needs. This ensures cost-efficiency and avoids duplicating infrastructure.

Support measures should be practical and step-by-step, tailored to the maturity level of each SE – from early-stage organisations unfamiliar with digital tools to more advanced ones aiming to scale. Vouchers or grants can reduce the cost of transition, while advisory services, mentoring, and peer learning help overcome fear or resistance to change.

Policymakers should also highlight success stories to showcase the concrete benefits of digital adoption – not just in terms of revenue, but also in reaching underserved groups and delivering social impact.

By embedding digital models into both operations and service delivery, SEs can strengthen their competitiveness, ensure long-term sustainability, and deliver more inclusive, scalable solutions.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Many SEs hesitate to adopt digital tools; targeted incentives and peer mentoring can accelerate uptake.
- **Austria:** Several SEs already use digital models; the priority is to expand their reach and integrate sustainability aspects as well as professionalize a mature utilization of AI based or AI supported business models.
- **Spain:** Success in SE digital business models requires fostering KPI culture, learning from diverse sectors, and supporting scalable, impact-driven innovation through practical training and incentives.

10.4.4. Facilitate access to existing digital platforms and ecosystems

To thrive in the digital economy, social enterprises (SEs) must be able to access and effectively use mainstream digital platforms – including e-commerce tools, CRM systems, funding portals, and online collaboration environments. However, many SEs struggle with complexity, cost, or lack of digital readiness.

Instead of developing new, separate digital platforms for SEs, public policy should focus on helping them navigate, adapt to, and benefit from existing tools and environments. This can include:

- Partnerships with tech providers to offer discounted or freemium access for SEs;
- Training programs to reduce the learning curve;
- Use of open-source, modular tools that are low-cost and customisable;
- Advisory services that help SEs select and implement the most appropriate platforms based on their needs and scale.

Efforts should also support interoperability and resource sharing across SEs, by promoting digital literacy, standardised data formats, and collaboration protocols – not necessarily by building new, SE-only infrastructure.

By positioning SEs within existing digital ecosystems – rather than outside them – policy helps ensure inclusion, competitiveness, and sustainable growth in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Lack of dedicated SE platforms makes it difficult to access digital markets; partnerships with corporates could address this.
- **Austria:** Some digital ecosystems already exist; the challenge is to certify and scale SE-friendly solutions.
- **Spain:** There is strong collaboration between the open source community and SE projects, enabling access to powerful, near-cutting-edge solutions. The tools exist, but SEs need to be aware, learn to use them, and invest in implementation support when needed.

10.4.5. Recognize digital work opportunities to improve labour market access

Digitalisation is opening new pathways into the labour market, particularly for people who face barriers to traditional employment. Remote work, online service provision, and micro-task platforms can offer flexible and accessible opportunities for women, youth, people with disabilities, and residents of disadvantaged rural areas.

Social enterprises (SEs) can play a key role as intermediaries and enablers, by:

- providing digital training and mentorship,
- offering access to shared equipment or co-working infrastructure,
- and connecting marginalised workers to digital labour platforms and clients.

Policymakers should formally recognise digital work – including freelance and platform-based models – as legitimate components of employment and inclusion strategies. Incentives and funding schemes can encourage SEs to create digital jobs, support hybrid working models, and act as inclusive employment hubs.

By combining training with real digital job opportunities, SEs can empower vulnerable groups, increase income security, and contribute to inclusive, digitally-enabled economic growth.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Digital job opportunities are underdeveloped; SEs could fill gaps in connecting rural populations to remote work.
- **Austria:** Remote work is more common; SEs should focus on inclusion of women and migrants through digital employment schemes.
- **Spain:** High urban-rural disparities remain; digital jobs can provide crucial opportunities for young people in remote areas.

10.5. Visibility, market integration

10.5.1. Strengthen SE visibility on mainstream marketplaces and business networks

Rather than creating a separate national marketplace for social enterprises (SEs), public policy should focus on helping SEs gain access to and visibility within existing commercial and institutional marketplaces – both digital and physical. SEs should be supported to:

- participate in national and regional trade fairs, e-commerce platforms, and B2B procurement channels;
- improve their branding, packaging, and storytelling to clearly communicate their social and environmental impact;

- meet the standards and requirements of public and corporate buyers, including ESG alignment.

Governments and support organisations can play a key role by offering:

- visibility campaigns,
- training in sales and marketing,
- and subsidised entry to mainstream promotional events and digital marketplaces.

The goal is not to separate SEs into parallel commercial systems, but to ensure they can compete and cooperate on equal footing, showcasing their value in the same arenas as traditional enterprises – while also making their impact visible and understandable to consumers and partners.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No national marketplace exists; launching one could significantly increase sector visibility.
- **Austria:** Regional fairs and events already exist; scaling them into a coordinated national framework would be the next step.
- **Spain:** Regional and sectoral SE platforms exist but lack visibility among the wider public; increased marketing investment is essential to boost their value and scale sector impact.

10.5.2. Develop branding and marketing support initiatives, including partnerships with influencers and media campaigns

Strong branding and marketing are essential for social enterprises (SEs) to compete and grow in mainstream markets. However, many SEs lack the capacity, resources, or skills to effectively position themselves and communicate their unique value proposition.

Public policy should therefore provide targeted support in brand development and marketing, including:

- training programs on visual identity, storytelling, and impact communication;
- subsidies for hiring professional designers or marketing consultants;
- and access to visibility opportunities, such as exhibitions, digital ad credits, or media partnerships.

Strategic collaborations with influencers, journalists, and content creators can help reach broader audiences, especially younger generations. Public media outlets should also be encouraged to feature SEs through

interviews, case studies, or thematic content – emphasising not just the products, but the positive social and environmental impact they generate.

Building brand awareness is not just about promotion – it's about equipping SEs with the tools, confidence, and language to stand out in competitive markets, build trust with customers, and attract long-term partners and investors.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Public broadcasters could play a crucial role by dedicating airtime to SE promotion.
- **Austria:** Marketing support is available in some ecosystems; expansion is needed to reach smaller SEs, in general the topic of SE needs more media coverage.
- **Spain:** Narratives are often weak or repetitive; providing storytelling kits and communication templates would directly address this gap. Greater marketing investment is also needed to strengthen visibility and impact.

10.5.3. Support partnerships between SEs and corporates through existing networks and targeted incentives

Strategic collaboration between social enterprises (SEs) and corporate partners is a key driver of scale, innovation, and impact. However, these partnerships often remain sporadic and ad hoc, limited by weak networks and lack of structured engagement.

Rather than building new matchmaking platforms, public policy should:

- leverage existing business networks, chambers of commerce, and CSR/ESG ecosystems to facilitate SE–corporate collaboration,
- support curated networking events, supplier development programs, and targeted calls for collaboration,
- and provide incentives for corporates to include SEs in their supply chains, social procurement strategies, and impact initiatives.

Examples include:

- ESG-related tax benefits or public procurement points for working with SEs,
- co-investment schemes where public funds match corporate contributions,
- or recognition frameworks that highlight socially engaged companies.

Over time, such measures can shift corporate engagement with SEs from one-off CSR donations to strategic, long-term partnerships built on mutual value creation, credibility, and shared goals.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Corporates are increasingly open to collaboration; a national matchmaking platform would structure and professionalize these efforts.
- **Austria:** The number of partnerships is rather underdeveloped; scaling and diversifying the matchmaking function could enhance sector-wide impact.
- **Spain:** In order to turn sporadic SE-corporate collaborations into lasting, mutually beneficial supply chain partnerships, leveraging new demand for ESG and CSR alliances, a trusted matchmaking platform is needed.

10.6. Labelling and quality management

10.6.1. Implement certification, labelling, and quality management frameworks

Certification and labelling are both important tools for building the credibility and visibility of social enterprises (SEs), but they serve different purposes and require different approaches.

Certification refers to the official recognition of an organization as a social enterprise based on core criteria such as social mission, reinvestment, governance, and public benefit. This process should be transparent, proportionate, and administered by an independent and professional body, ensuring legitimacy while avoiding political capture or misuse.

Labelling or quality assurance frameworks, on the other hand, relate to performance standards (e.g. impact, sustainability, customer service) and should be voluntary, modular, and implemented gradually based on SE capacity. These tools can support continuous improvement, access to markets, and policy incentives, especially when aligned with international frameworks (e.g. EU Social Economy, ISO, or ESG standards).

By clearly separating certification (who qualifies as an SE) from labelling (how well they perform), policy can avoid confusion, reduce administrative burdens, and offer relevant support to SEs at different stages of development.

Both systems should be transparent, inclusive, and co-developed with stakeholders to ensure credibility and practical relevance.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No SE-specific certification exists; developing one would enhance credibility.
- **Austria:** The new VSE-label is a national milestone but needs more promotion and incentives to gain members; harmonization and integration with impact measurement tools like an Impact Score would strengthen the label's recognition.
- **Spain:** A national SE certification and labeling system—led by public administration to foster trust—should be broadly promoted and unified, as its value depends on widespread recognition among SEs, corporates, and consumers.

10.6.2. Support voluntary participation in international SE labelling initiatives to foster credibility and cross-border cooperation

Voluntary participation in international labelling schemes can help social enterprises (SEs) gain external validation, align with global standards, and expand into cross-border markets. These frameworks – such as those promoted under EU Social Economy Action Plan – provide recognised indicators of social value, governance, and sustainability, helping SEs stand out to consumers, partners, and investors.

Governments can support this process by:

- subsidising application and certification costs,
- offering advisory services and technical assistance,
- and encouraging SE networks to participate through peer exchange and capacity building.

Importantly, participation should remain voluntary and aligned with SE capacities and goals. For some SEs, international visibility is a strategic priority; for others, local relevance and embeddedness matter more.

By facilitating access to international labelling schemes – without mandating them – public policy can help SEs enhance their credibility, open new markets, and strengthen their position in a growing global ecosystem.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** International participation is limited; targeted support would enable SEs to join.
- **Austria:** SEs are well-positioned to participate; emphasis should be on scaling and diversifying participation.
- **Spain:** Aligning with EU frameworks will further boost comparability and impact.

10.6.3. Provide training and capacity-building programs on quality assurance, impact measurement, and sustainable business practices

To meet certification requirements and improve performance, social enterprises (SEs) need access to practical, experience-based training in quality management, impact measurement, and sustainable business models. Rather than creating new training structures from scratch, existing education and business development programs should be enhanced to include SE-specific modules, allowing SEs to benefit from mainstream learning infrastructures while receiving targeted guidance.

Training should include:

- step-by-step guidance on implementing quality assurance systems,
- introductions to ESG reporting frameworks (e.g. GRI, ESRS),
- and practical examples of circular economy or sustainable resource management adapted to SE contexts.

Programs must be tailored to the size and maturity of SEs – from basic capacity-building for micro-enterprises to advanced systems implementation for scaling organisations. By strengthening internal capabilities in a cost-effective, integrated way, training empowers SEs to build credibility, meet certification criteria, and operate more efficiently and transparently.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Strong demand exists for practical training on impact measurement and business sustainability.
 - **Austria:** Training is already offered in some ecosystems; scaling and integrating it with formal certification frameworks is key.
- Spain:** Despite an abundance of training programs, SEs often lack practical business skills; information doesn't permeate, so more applied, hands-on learning and self-awareness of professionalism gaps are needed.

10.7. Impact measurement and policy effectiveness

10.7.1. Support the adoption of flexible, SE-driven impact measurement approaches aligned with international standards

Impact measurement is essential for social enterprises (SEs) to understand, communicate, and improve their contributions to society. However, no single standardized framework can serve all SEs, given their diversity in mission, size, and context. Instead of enforcing a rigid, top-down model, public policy should promote a flexible, SE-driven approach to impact measurement, offering guidance and tools that can be adapted to each organisation's specific goals and capacities.

Widely used approaches – such as *Theory of Change*, *Social Impact Assessment*, or *logic frameworks* – can serve as starting points. However, the emphasis should be on helping SEs:

- select the model that best fits their activities,
- access training, templates, and mentoring,
- and use simple digital tools for data collection and analysis.

Integration with international standards and indicators (such as GRI, ESRS, OECD) should be encouraged where relevant, especially for SEs aiming to work with institutional funders or corporate partners.

A policy environment that empowers rather than mandates builds trust, encourages learning, and leads to more authentic and effective impact management across the sector.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Many SEs already attempt impact measurement, but tools are inconsistent; a national framework could unify and professionalize these efforts.
- **Austria:** Advanced discussions on impact assessment exist; piloting a standardized Impact Score could position Austria as a regional leader.
- **Spain:** Many SEs and universities already collaborate to measure impact and standardize tools like VSI, yet approaches remain fragmented. A unified, flexible national framework—aligned with international standards—would boost comparability, credibility, and resource allocation.

10.7.2. Help SEs identify and use relevant, proportionate impact metrics based on existing international standards

Quantifiable metrics are valuable tools for social enterprises (SEs) to communicate their impact clearly, build trust, and attract funding. However, the challenge is not the lack of indicators, but the difficulty of selecting and applying the right ones.

Rather than developing new indicator sets, public policy should promote the use of existing, internationally recognised frameworks – such as:

- GRI (Global Reporting Initiative),
- ESRS (European Sustainability Reporting Standards),
- OECD impact indicators, or
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) monitoring tools.

Support should focus on helping SEs:

- choose indicators relevant to their mission and capacity,
- combine quantitative data with qualitative stories to present a holistic picture,
- and use accessible templates, tools, or software to streamline reporting.

Particular care should be taken to avoid overburdening micro- or early-stage SEs. Proportionality, flexibility, and relevance must guide all impact measurement efforts.

Empowering SEs to select the most meaningful indicators – rather than imposing rigid sets – ensures that impact reporting is both credible and practical, enhancing learning and accountability without creating unnecessary barriers.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Many SEs already collect basic impact data; support is needed to help them apply relevant international indicators without imposing uniform standards.
- **Austria:** Strong potential to link metrics to a yet to develop three-dimensional Impact Score (social, ecological, economic).
- **Spain:** Defining standard, quantifiable SE metrics—across social, environmental, and economic impact—would clarify outcomes and align with SDGs, but indicators must remain proportionate to avoid overburdening small or early-stage SEs. Balancing numbers with qualitative narratives ensures meaningful, credible communication.

10.7.3. Introduce incentive-based funding linked to measurable outcomes

Linking public funding to measurable outcomes can create strong incentives for social enterprises (SEs) to deliver lasting impact. Models such as Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) or performance-based grants reward effectiveness, innovation, and sustainability, while increasing transparency and accountability.

To be fair and effective, outcome-based funding schemes must be co-designed with SEs, ensuring that indicators and reporting requirements are realistic and proportional. Pilot programs can test these approaches before broader implementation.

Aligning funding with measurable results improves resource allocation and encourages SEs to invest in long-term, mission-driven strategies – without overburdening them with unnecessary bureaucracy.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Outcome-based schemes could motivate SEs but require capacity-building in impact measurement before large-scale adoption.
- **Austria:** The ecosystem is advanced enough to pilot such schemes; there was also a successful pilot call on national level; further steps should be taken to implement these instruments in the SE industry
- **Spain:** Funding often relies heavily on subsidies; linking part of this support to measurable outcomes would strengthen sustainability and grant better incentives.

10.7.4. Support voluntary, transparent impact reporting through practical tools and guidance

Transparency builds trust and visibility, but must be approached in a way that supports – rather than burdens – social enterprises (SEs). Instead of mandatory open-data platforms, SEs should be encouraged and supported to share impact results voluntarily, using clear formats and secure channels.

Governments and intermediaries can help by:

- providing templates, reporting guides, and capacity-building workshops,
- promoting good practice examples,
- and encouraging impact communication through SEs' own websites, reports, and stakeholder communications.

By fostering a culture of meaningful, voluntary transparency – without mandating centralised disclosure – policy can strengthen sector credibility while respecting diversity, autonomy, and data sensitivity.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Transparency is limited; open platforms would increase trust among funders and communities.
- **Austria:** Strong potential to integrate transparency into existing monitoring and certification systems; yet it lacks strong incentives to invest the necessary resources into constant reporting.
- **Spain:** Wider adoption of open-data platforms for SE impact—leveraging existing tools like Ensenya el Cor/Balanç Social—paired with periodic audits and strong public promotion, would boost consistency, credibility, and sector-wide learning across regions.

10.7.5. Develop long-term monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems for SE policies and funding

Long-term monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for assessing the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of social enterprise (SE) policies and funding schemes. These systems should track not only outputs (e.g., jobs created, services delivered), but also long-term societal outcomes, such as contributions to inclusion, sustainability, and digital transition.

To ensure objectivity, independent evaluation mechanisms should be established, involving research institutions and sector experts. Where possible, sector-specific M&E frameworks should be aligned with policy domains (e.g., social care, education, green economy).

Feedback loops between policymakers, SEs, funders, and beneficiaries are vital. These ensure that lessons learned inform continuous improvement, and that policies remain aligned with evolving social and environmental needs.

Well-designed M&E systems contribute to smarter policymaking, better resource allocation, and stronger impact orientation – without creating excessive burdens for SEs themselves.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** No consistent M&E exists for SE policies; introducing it would support evidence-based decision-making.
- **Austria:** Monitoring is relatively advanced; integrating it with standardized metrics and instruments like an Impact Score would strengthen results.
- **Spain:** Evaluations are fragmented by region; a national framework could unify efforts and provide consistency.

10.8. Green and sustainable transition

10.8.1. Open existing green incentives to SEs and support sustainability-oriented transformation

Social enterprises (SEs) can be powerful agents of the green transition – especially in areas like recycling, agroecology, sustainable tourism, and renewable energy. However, many SEs face financial and technical barriers to integrating sustainability into their operations.

Rather than creating separate green incentive schemes for SEs, public policy should:

- explicitly include SEs in existing green support programs designed for SMEs (e.g. green tax relief, eco-innovation grants, energy efficiency vouchers),
- and complement this with targeted training, mentoring, and incubation to help SEs adopt and adapt sustainability practices.

Special efforts should ensure that micro and community-based SEs – often closest to citizens – can access and benefit from these opportunities. Incentives should also support green transition within everyday operations, not just new environmental projects.

By combining access to green finance with capacity-building and practical guidance, SEs can play a meaningful role in delivering the green transition in an inclusive and community-rooted way.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Incentives should focus on rural SEs and energy-related initiatives (e.g. community energy, recycling), where potential is high but funding scarce.
- **Austria:** Green transition support already exists; simplifying access for smaller SEs and linking it to social goals would enhance inclusiveness.
- **Spain:** Ambitious green transition incentives exist, but access is often complex for smaller SEs and cooperatives. Most support targets large projects, while local, agro-ecological and rural or community-driven SEs struggle with bureaucracy or lack of awareness.

10.8.2. Support SEs in integrating sustainability into operations through ESG alignment and circular economy practices

Embedding sustainability into daily operations strengthens the resilience, credibility, and long-term viability of social enterprises (SEs). This includes:

- adopting energy-efficient technologies,
- reducing material and resource waste,
- applying circular economy principles, and
- ensuring ethical and local sourcing.

Aligning with ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) frameworks helps SEs communicate their values and impact to investors, public funders, and business partners.

To make this transition feasible:

- SEs need tailored training, toolkits, and mentoring to translate abstract ESG goals into concrete actions;
- pilot projects should be supported to showcase integrated social–environmental business models;
- and the process should be gradual and capacity-based, recognising that smaller SEs may need more time and support.

Sustainability should become a standard – not by obligation, but because it strengthens purpose-driven business, improves performance, and unlocks new partnerships and funding.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** Many SEs lack knowledge and tools for ESG integration; capacity-building and mentoring are critical.
- **Austria:** ESG integration of SEs and the market is yet underrated and underdeveloped; next approaches should focus on circular economy models and linking SEs to corporate ESG supply chains.
- **Spain:** Develop practical resources, training, and tailored support so all SEs can integrate sustainability and ESG criteria into daily operations. Provide tools, guides, pilot projects, and knowledge-sharing spaces for gradual, effective, and standardized adoption. However, it is important to consider project scale and avoid overwhelming small initiatives with restrictions or mandatory training.

10.8.3. Expand access to green funding and investment opportunities for SEs

Access to green finance is vital for social enterprises (SEs) aiming to integrate sustainability into their operations. Yet, traditional green investment schemes often favour larger actors, leaving smaller SEs – especially rural and early-stage ones – at a disadvantage.

To close this gap:

- public-private partnerships should open existing green funds to SEs, not just large companies;
- tailored instruments – such as micro-loans, blended finance, and guarantees – should reflect the scale and risk profile of SEs;
- and support structures (e.g. investment-readiness coaching, investor matchmaking) should prepare SEs to apply and succeed.

Eligibility should be linked to clear sustainability criteria, but remain proportionate and accessible. Transparent application processes and outreach are key to ensure inclusion.

Making green finance truly accessible to SEs ensures that sustainability and social innovation go hand in hand – supporting local solutions to global challenges.

Country-specific:

- **Hungary:** SEs struggle to access both green and mainstream finance; dedicated small-scale green funds would fill a major gap.
- **Austria:** Green funding and investment opportunities exist, but are related too much on high-tech solutions. SEs need targeted pathways to access them, especially early-stage ventures.
- **Spain:** Strong potential exists in renewable energy and agro-ecology. Regional SEs need national coordination to access larger green funds. The best path is intercooperation, but this requires first building trust and establishing clear incentives, benefits, and obligations for all parties involved.

11.

Networking and knowledge sharing



11.1 Knowledge management and information transfer

Knowledge management is a cornerstone for strengthening social enterprise ecosystems. The GRESODI project has demonstrated that structured information sharing significantly increases the capacity of social enterprises to innovate, scale, and sustain their impact. Effective knowledge management requires both digital tools and human interaction.

Methods and practices include:

- **Centralised repositories:** Developing national and European-level online platforms where case studies, training materials, policy briefs, and toolkits are openly accessible. These repositories should be user-friendly, multilingual, and regularly updated to reflect emerging practices.
- **Peer-to-peer learning:** Creating opportunities for practitioners to share experiences through workshops, mentoring programmes, and thematic communities of practice. Such exchanges encourage mutual trust, reduce duplication of efforts, and accelerate adoption of proven solutions.
- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Building bridges between social enterprises, academia, corporates, and civil society organisations to facilitate knowledge transfer. Universities and research institutes can provide analytical tools, while enterprises contribute practical insights from implementation.
- **Digital platforms:** Leveraging technology to support networking, e-learning, and collaborative project development. Platforms should integrate features such as matchmaking functions, funding opportunities, and discussion forums tailored to the needs of social enterprises.
- **Transnational exchange:** Encouraging European-level study visits, joint incubation programmes, and cross-border thematic networks. These exchanges enable the adaptation of good practices to different contexts while fostering long-term partnerships.

By institutionalising these practices, knowledge transfer becomes systematic rather than ad hoc, ensuring that social enterprises have equal access to the resources and expertise needed to thrive.

11.2 Policy-maker engagement

Sustainable ecosystem development requires continuous and structured dialogue with policymakers at local, national, and European levels. Social enterprises often face fragmented recognition within public policy, making engagement essential for mainstreaming their role.

Recommended methods and forms of dialogue include:

- **National and regional roundtables:** Regular multi-stakeholder meetings where policymakers, social enterprises, and support organisations jointly assess challenges and co-design solutions. These roundtables ensure that policies are grounded in practical realities.
- **Advisory councils and working groups:** Establishing dedicated advisory bodies on social entrepreneurship within ministries or regional governments. Such bodies can serve as formal channels for consultation, monitoring, and coordination.
- **Policy labs and pilot projects:** Involving policymakers directly in experimentation, such as incubation programmes or green and digital transition pilots. This practical exposure builds understanding and increases willingness to adapt supportive regulations.
- **Evidence-based advocacy:** Using data from impact measurement, case studies, and ecosystem assessments to provide policymakers with credible and actionable insights. Transparent evidence reinforces the legitimacy of social enterprises as partners in delivering public value.
- **Transnational policy dialogues:** Facilitating European-level networking among policymakers, enabling exchange of good practices and harmonisation of frameworks. Cross-country collaboration enhances learning and creates momentum for policy alignment.
- **Open communication channels:** Maintaining ongoing dialogue beyond formal meetings, through newsletters, policy briefs, and digital platforms dedicated to the social economy. Regular updates keep stakeholders informed and engaged, reducing policy gaps.

These practices contribute to building trust, improving coordination, and ensuring that social enterprises are not treated as isolated initiatives but as integral actors in economic and social development strategies. Continuous policy engagement secures a stable enabling environment where social enterprises can achieve long-term impact.



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