



# Interreg

CENTRAL EUROPE

European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

## IN SITU

vol. 2



PRIORITY: INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

# Introduction

The economic crisis affected the markets globally and drew attention to searching for new possibilities for employment and increasing of resilience of businesses. All of the above are focused on ensuring the welfare of the society. The importance of social innovation addressing social, economic, political and environmental challenges of the 21st century has been recognized not only within the Europe 2020 strategy, but also on a global scale. In the face of the social shift from an industrial society to knowledge and service economy and the profound change, this entails in the economic and social structures of modern society, there are many indications signalling a fundamental shift in the innovation paradigm that can be detected.

New economic sectors and industries are increasingly determining the look of the economy and society and are changing the modes of production and innovation. Challenges such as ageing population, migration, all kinds of crisis situations or climate change entail social demands and action, for which traditional ways, in which markets, states, and civil society responded so far, are no longer sufficient. At the same time, technological innovation encounters limitations when it comes to resolving pressing social challenges.

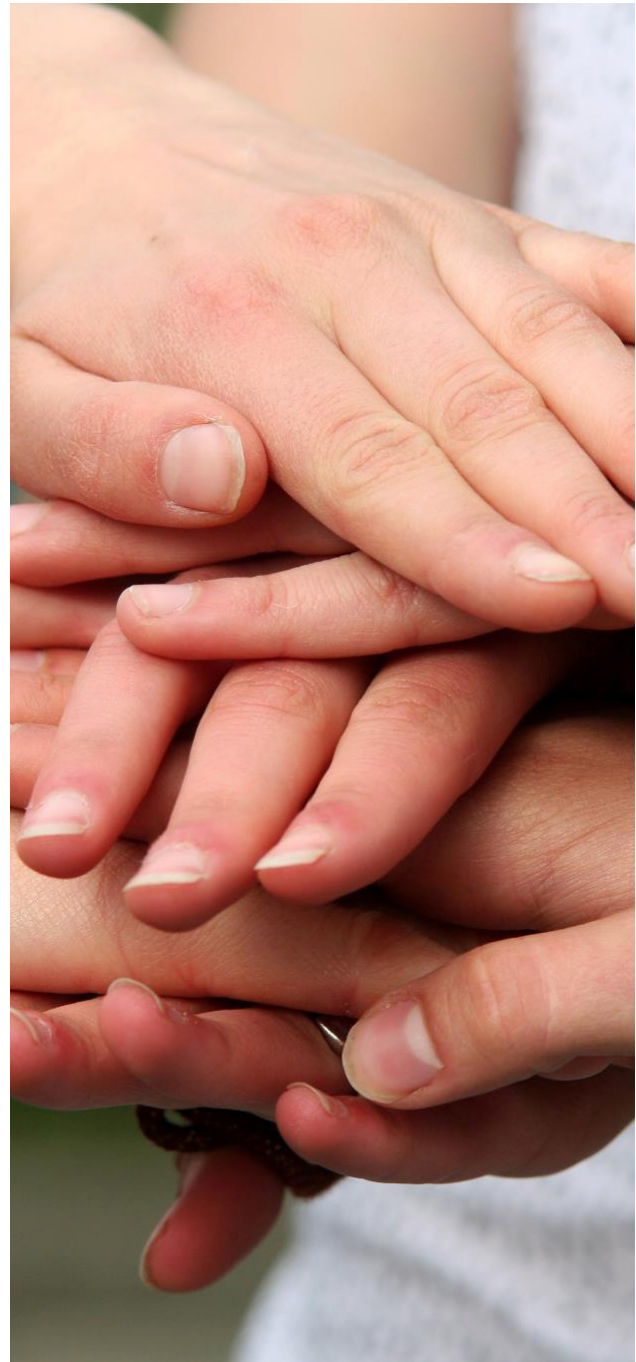
Social innovation can be interpreted as “a process of collective creation in which the members of a certain collective unit learn, invent and lay out new rules for the social game of collaboration and of conflict or, in a word, a new social practice, and in this process they acquire the necessary cognitive, rational and organizational skills”. Social innovation should become a part of a new culture of empowerment which is central to create major social change. Therefore, social innovations need to mobilise citizens to take an active part in innovation processes and thereby enhance society's generic innovative capacity.

One of the tools supporting development of social innovations is social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs and the social enterprise are the actors driving social change through innovation. The fact that the expression “social innovation” made a popular entry on the scene and has pushed back the use of social entrepreneurship to some degree reflects the recognition that social entrepreneurs are not the only actors bringing about social innovation. Governments, academia, businesses and large NGOs are discovering the potential for driving social change through innovative approaches either by themselves or in cooperation with social entrepreneurs. Social enterprise can come in va-

rious legal forms, for profit, not for profit or a combination of both. Most social entrepreneurs set up a variety of different legal entities to suit their hybrid structures. However, a rising number of social enterprises, those more accurately called social businesses, are aiming for or already achieving a small profit, as they address a societal objectives as their main mission. The key aspect is that the organization maximizes social value creation while making the financial return acceptable.

[This booklet presents some success stories of social businesses ideas and concepts which were developed by the participants of the first training cohorts in our project. Depending on the region of origin, they address different issues, as all members of the partnership identified different kinds of needs. We are pleased to invite you to follow our websites and social media channels.](#)

IN SITU Team



# Project Partnership



## AUSTRIA

- Board of Education for the City of Vienna
- Vienna Business Agency



## CROATIA

- City of Rijeka
- Science and Technology Park of the University of Rijeka



## GERMANY

- Stuttgart Media University
- Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation



## ITALY

- Veneto Region
- ENAIP Veneto Social Enterprise



## POLAND

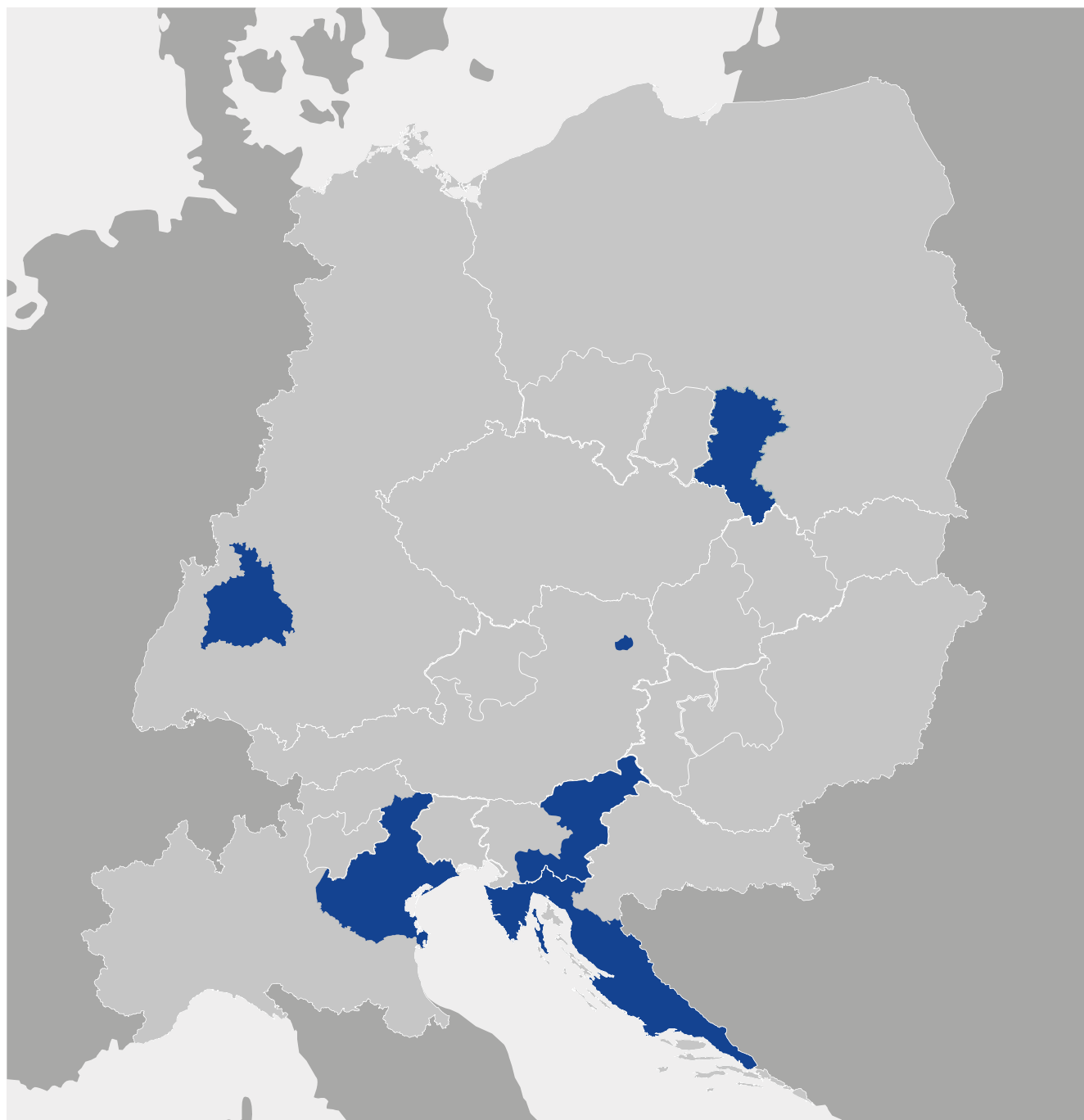
- Silesia Region
- WSB University



## SLOVENIA

- PRIZMA Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities
- OZARA d.o.o. Service and Disability Company







# Cycling Ambassador

“Cycling has always been my passion and with time, its importance and positive impact on my life only grew.”

With her business idea, Karin Kuna wants to bring cycling in people's daily routine in order to prevent health problems and reduce the CO2-Footprint. In her long-term plan, the bicycles should become more affordable for socially disadvantaged people, for example through special offers from the employers.

„Think – act – enjoy - move is the motto of my business and of my life.”

As a passionate cyclist, Karin Kuna was always thinking and wondering: What a nice place would your town or city become, if the majority of its residents committed to travel to their workplace by bike? How much could the air pollution improve? And people's health and happiness as well? She asked these questions herself and also the fans of her cycling blog for years. Until she decided that raising questions is not enough and it is time to act. Based on her experience in marketing, Karin now develops conceptual designs around cycling and offers to prepare tailor made solutions in order to improve company policies.

The project's goal is to enable all people to enjoy riding a bike, regardless of their age or social status, which includes not only finding the right motivation but in many cases also financial support and increased accessibility of bicycles. Numerous studies show that the modern culture does not leave people enough time for sport activities – but most of us have to go to work five days a week – such a perfect opportunity to move! After company decision makers get involved, real social impact and sustainability is guaranteed: set a healthy daily routine for individuals, shift towards health-oriented company culture and even make a few more steps towards greener world and society.



/karin.kuna.9



www.karinkuna.at





# Projekt Alma

Maria and Natalia are “Projekt Alma”. They live in Stuttgart in Germany and are originally from Colombia. As a business idea, they create colorful underwear and want to convey the special flair and lifestyle of Latin America to the customers. They also aim to connect women with their home country and create a fair alternative to conventional brands.

The production of the underwear takes place under fair working conditions in Colombia. Eventually, Maria & Natalia would like to collaborate in the future with women's organizations that are committed to the professional and social development of women. Projekt Alma was the winner of the IN SITU GAME CHANGER AWARDS in the category “Most promising” and received the most votes from the audience.









# HR - Little Squirrel

Under the slogan “Let’s save memories together!”, Anita Ladišić designs handbags, pillow cushions, brooches and toys made from upcycled textiles and/or textile materials with sentimental value.

The fashion industry is the second largest polluter in the world and the clothing’s life span is approx. 3-4 years. Moreover, negative emotions often occur when throwing away textile products that carry good memories and sentimental value. Most people have piles of textile at home they are reluctant to get rid of due to memories attached to these garments.

LITTLE SQUIRREL reduces pollution by upcycling these textile products, creating new products, while at the same time keeping memories alive in a functional manner. In detail, LITTLE SQUIRREL offers two different types of products: ready-made gadgets and personalised items. Ready-made products are available on the web shop in the form of “ready-to-wear” upcycled items, while personalised products are arranged directly with a LITTLE SQUIRREL designer prior to production, in order to best meet the client’s wishes regarding the specific textile item.

The target market is represented by employed women, open-minded towards upcycling, second-hand lifestyle and are active community members. In February 2022 the first prototype series has been designed and created, receiving very positive feedback.



LITTLE SQUIRREL









# EDB Home Decor

"After over 30 years spent working in corporate, I discovered the power of creativity as a form of therapy and fell in love with the ancient technique of Macramé."

EDB Home Décor was founded by Elisabetta Dalla Benetta. Elisabetta is middle-age Italian women passionate about sewing and in particular macramé; a form of textile produced using knotting techniques.

Elisabetta's business idea was born during the pandemic. In that period, people were forced to spend more time indoors and it was then, that their need for a feel-good ambience that's safe and comfortable became more urgent. To meet these needs, Elisabetta decided to share her passion with the world, creating EDB Home Decor. Today, EDB Home Décor offers original one-of-a-kind handmade textile Art created with the ancient technique of macramé, combining beauty with functionality.

According to Elisabetta, when furnishing or refurbishing a house, consumers, especially female consumers, purchase decorative textiles. These contribute to the personality of a home, its ambience, drama and aesthetics. At the same time, more and more businesses are looking at handmade items to distinguish themselves.

Her project aims at consolidating EDB Home Décor in order to turn it into a movement, which encourages other middle-aged women, to tap into their creativity to improve their mental, spiritual and physical well-being.



@edb\_home\_decor



/edbhomedecor



www.edbhomedecor.com

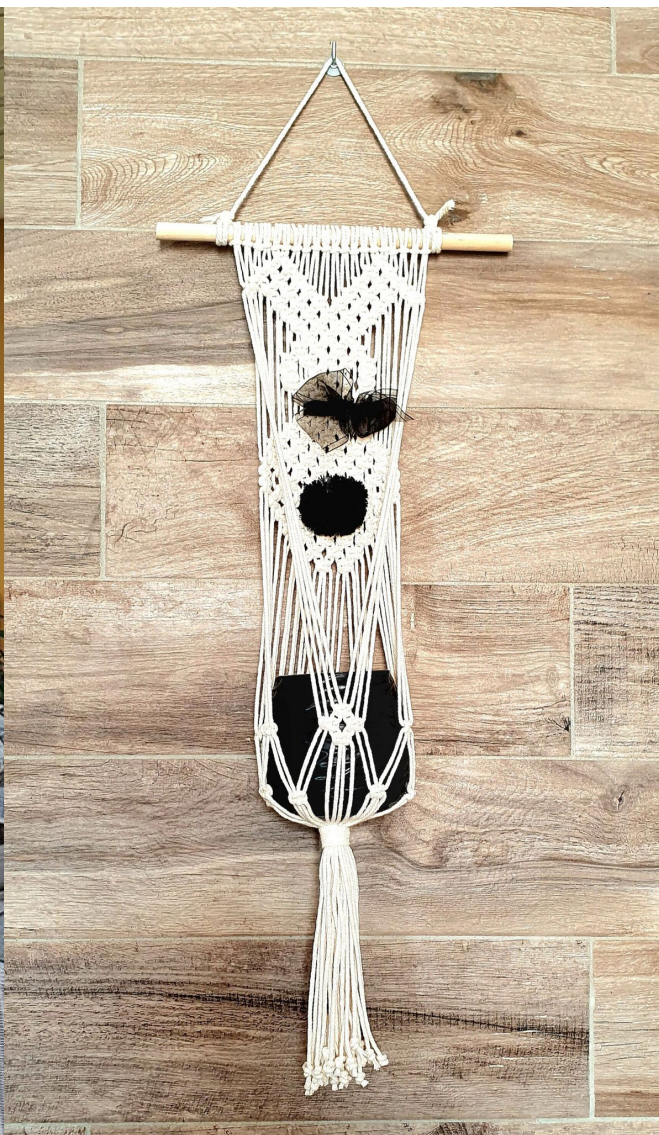


EDB Home Decor



edb0124







## Mario's House

The idea was developed by Chiara, from the Province of Vicenza. Chiara is being treated for cancer and her father, Mario, is no longer there due to the same disease. "Mario's house" was born from a dream...to create a welcoming place for children and young people...it is called a family house or community for minors, but she prefers to call it..."La CASA di Mario" in the name of her father.

Mario's house is a house to grow, like in a big family that provides among other activities Games; Pet therapy; After-school; Gardening; Art and Accompaniment to work.

14



## Hoi Cocino Yo

HOI COCINO YO is a social project in favor of elderly people in street conditions in Comedor Social barrio Cuba Pereira. Jeny during the pandemic has created with her partners a team of volunteers willing to address the problems of elderly people in street situations in the Cuba neighborhood in the Colombian city of Pereira; In doing so they try to generate emotional support and channel efforts to improve the quality of life. The project aims to help elderly people in street situations who are denied

one or more rights, such as health, housing, work or social justice, who have to solve their housing problems in places that do not constitute home, such as public spaces, squares, streets and hospital exits.



/ComedorSocialBarrioCubaPereira







# Dancing Seniors

Seniors persons were particularly affected by COVID-19 pandemic. It resulted in long-term isolation and weakening of social relations. A group of members of the Third-Age-University decided to face the challenge of rebuilding and strengthening of relations combined with improvement of physical stamina and health. Initially a group of seniors is organised dancing courses for small groups. During the pandemic, due to the sanitary restrictions, there were only groups of maximum 4 persons plus the coach. It was important to re-establish both – physical fitness and interpersonal contacts destroyed by anti-covid restrictions.

Regular dancing, if it becomes a habit, will have a positive effect on keeping fit and, consequently, on the health of seniors.

This initiative was awarded during the 2nd IN SITU Gamechanger Fairs and Expo.

Dancing is helpful in recovery from Covid – it should be light or medium intense, depending on the state of health and physical condition. That is why our volunteer coaches pay so much attention to safety of the participants of the dancing sessions. Social impact of it is also obvious. The groups dancing together are very carefully selected to minimize the risks of injury or any other threat resulting from the pandemic. Later on it is foreseen to organise bigger groups and invite more persons for joint activity. Depending on the weather conditions, the meetings may be held also outdoors. The next step proposed by the senior persons is to organize dance tournaments, thanks to which it should be possible to rebuild social bonds in even broader environment.







# Ksenija Jerković

Ksenija used to work in laboratory medicine at the University Medical Centre Maribor. As an analyst in protein diagnostics and a team leader, after 25 years of an often stressful job, she decided to follow her passion – traveling and writing.

With her family, Ksenija visited over 40 destinations across the world. By organising travels on their own, they could explore the country in a more authentic and responsible way than by booking classical tourist packages. Throughout the years, Ksenija collected many materials and stories that she would like to pass on to other travellers and encourage them to set on a journey designed by their hearts.

Her social idea was to start a travel blog. It is aimed at less experienced travellers who would like to travel on their own and are looking for inspiration, useful travel tips, tried out routes, and practical information that can help save time when preparing for the journey. In her stories and descriptions, Ksenija also wants to promote sustainable and responsible travels, support local economies and initiate genuine contact with the locals.

The blog started out in Slovenian language and is now being translated to English. Visitors are invited to add information from their journeys and to jointly create a community of responsible travellers.







# Lessons learnt from the project

Veneto Region decided to focus on long-term unemployed women under 30 and over 50 years old, thus exploiting the advantages of intergenerational learning in terms of exchange of knowledge and values.

We delivered a modular training, including both skills aimed at individual empowerment and specific knowledge on how to define and structure a business idea.

This comprehensive approach allowed the participants to develop entrepreneurial skills alongside with a more conscious approach to working life.

We have identified the elements that contributed to the success of the training:

- Online training appeared to be the most effective approach for the chosen target group, even beyond the health emergency: it allowed participants to take part without sacrificing family commitments (a particularly important matter for the identified target) and also allowed reaching more people in the region, by eliminating physical distance;
- In terms of content, including lessons on digital/social media marketing proved to be an

essential part of the training, especially for the over-50s participants, lacking adequate knowledge of the topic;

- Group sessions were more effective than individual meetings, even when participants needed assistance for the development of their business ideas, thus proving the importance of a peer-to-peer approach alongside with individual support.

People who have been out of the labour market for a while might end up believing they have nothing to offer. Actually, the women involved in the training showed creativity and talents they were not even aware of.

The most important lesson we have learned is that working on entrepreneurship can significantly improve the attitude of long-term unemployed, this enhancing their chances of successfully re-entering in the job market.

The German training program „Empowered by Entrepreneurship” was jointly developed and organised by the Stuttgart Media University and the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation. Both rounds of the program had to be adapted to virtual formats. Although this worked very



well, it was obvious and crucial that the groups had at least one chance to get to know each other in person and to bond. Due to the missing personal contact the mentoring became even more important. The rather diverse groups had a wide variety of requirements and the level of support also varied greatly. Some of the participants very quickly felt at home in the digital environment and also coped well with the content, others needed more support with organization and technical issues. In any case the mentors had to focus on the content of the workshops and support the participants in developing their ideas. In a virtual environment the communication channels are very important, they need to be easily accessible and flexible enough for all purposes.

The IN SITU project came just in time when the initiative for strengthening of the ecosystem for social innovation and social entrepreneurship in Podravje region has been initiated. By working with the young and older unemployed, the IN SITU could provide important learnings about this target group.

Participants of the training and mentoring programme come from different social background, have different knowledge and skills as well as ambitions. This makes the programme more dynamic and interesting, however also requires more flexibility and adaptability from trainers and mentors.

Most of participants' project ideas were at the very beginning. The programme made an important step forward, although not all ideas could be realised within six months. The added value of the

IN SITU programme is to work holistically; besides the support in the assessment and development of the business ideas, participants are empowered and get support in career development and employment. Intergenerational exchange and peer to peer support, which could function much better when working face-to-face, was also highly appreciated by participants along with the possibility for networking with and learning from peers in other cooperating countries.

Cooperation in the IN-SITU project was a great experience for OZARA. No matter the challenges, that emerged during the project, combination of on-line and off-line work in Social innovation Hubs has however contributed to understanding the intergenerational challenges in broader perspective. The peer support element is one of the elements that functions best when done face to face, notwithstanding, we believe our regional teams made all possible, to combine working methods in an effective way to offer best possible support to all participants thus enabling interpersonal exchange.

Looking at the future, we believe the contents and working methods used, will be very important for the support services for SE sector in general as there is room for improvement and the project will for sure contribute to a better understanding of SE in general, contribute to affirmation of need having SIH know how for the sector and most of all – bringing lessons learnt from other partner regions directly into regional and national environments.

# Strategic dimension of social innovations and entrepreneurship

Social Innovation is new ideas that meet social needs: private, public and non-profit actors work together to develop innovative solutions to emerging societal challenges.

These innovative solutions can vary in the form they take and can include new services, new labour market integration processes, new competencies, new jobs, and new forms of participation that improve the position of individuals, including those forming part of the workforce and their quality of life.

Due to the wide range of potential benefits that can arise from social innovation, it has become a policy priority. Therefore, policy makers at local level need the tools and frameworks to analyse the situation, in order to develop supporting policies for social innovation.

Establishing an efficient social innovation ecosystem requires a generative approach aimed at creating social value and institutional change as well, focusing on three issues: networking, co-planning of interventions, management and sustainability, with the identification of enablers as community managers and resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the role of social innovation to the fore by providing innovative solutions aimed at strengthening public services to complement government action. Local economic and social resilience is not only about a region's ability to resist and repel shocks, but also about building capacity to adapt and reorient its structures to create new paths and solutions. Strong connections among social actors and consistent knowledge transfer across networks can help building resilience.

Businesses are increasingly engaged in social innovation by providing skills and competences, supporting the development of new business models and often providing the necessary resources. In addition to businesses becoming increasingly socially innovative and responsible, there are new types of entrepreneurial initiatives aiming to address societal issues, and they are on the rise. These include social entrepreneurship initiatives belonging to the private sector (e.g. profit with purpose businesses), as well as impact entrepreneurship, defined as the development of sustained applications and solutions that collectively address grand challenges making the world a better place.

Social economy organisations primarily focus on addressing societal needs while developing economic activities through business models based on collaboration, typically at the local level. They include associations, cooperatives, mutual organisations, foundations and social enterprises. Social economy organisations are often initiators and implementers of social innovation because their missions are strongly associated with social or environmental purposes and due to their specific features, such as an inclusive and participatory governance.

Acting appropriately on the local ecosystem is crucial to increase the scalability of the social innovation initiatives that originate there, thus also increasing the impact generated. This implies creating the contextual conditions that allow the first experiences (sometimes almost "pioneering") to transform into replicable models.

To this end, it is important to invest in tangible and intangible infrastructures that facilitate the functioning of the local ecosystem through the provision of general services, i.e. support for the development of networks, the promotion of training and skills transfer initiatives and adequate

planning and redevelopment of urban spaces. The ultimate goal of these actions is to establish an atmosphere of trust and collaboration that supports the exchange of complex information and knowledge, the definition of shared rules of conduct, the development of joint initiatives, and greater involvement of the various stakeholders.

The experience developed in the INSITU project, with the implementation of Social Innovation Hubs, is a first pilot that enable policy level to set up an intervention model, based on the creation of a social innovation ecosystem as a first step of a structural approach to social innovation.



# Interreg

CENTRAL EUROPE



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

IN SITU



[www.insituproject.eu](http://www.insituproject.eu)



[www.interreg-central.eu/in-situ](http://www.interreg-central.eu/in-situ)