



# Social innovation EcosystEm Development (SEED)

SEED is building up national competence centres for social innovation in Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovenia. Researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and civil servants are working together to support ESF managing authorities in the implementation of ESF+ funding for mainstream social innovation, to address societal challenges and create a positive impact. Key principles applied include co-design, and the active participation of stakeholders and the public sector.

## Building national competence centres for social innovation in the EU Member States

SEED is one of the six projects supported by the European Commission in order to establish national competence centres for social innovation across the EU. During two years (May 2021-May 2023) social innovation organisations, research centres, ESF managing authorities and other partners design and develop competence centres, which can help their countries to promote social innovation, including with funding from ESF+ and other EU programmes.

The national competence centres will focus on several functions:

- 🕒 **Capacity-building:**
  - Building capacity among a range of stakeholders: ESF+ managing authorities, local and regional authorities, practitioners, support organisations, donors, etc.
  - Raising awareness of the social innovation concept.
  - Developing tools and methods to achieve and scale-up impact.
- 🌐 **Networking, synergies and resources:**
  - Collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations, academia, etc.
  - Synergies between different EU funding schemes.
- 🌍 **Transnational exchange**
  - Sharing knowledge: what does/does not work?
  - Beyond sharing: cooperating in joint endeavours, active mentoring and partnerships.

## Expected results for each country



**Competence centre for social innovation**



**Blueprint for a strategy and action plan**



**Analysis of strengths, weakness and sources of inspiration**



**Collection of initiatives started or replicated**

**Each project will test the replication or scaling-up of one or two social innovations.**

# Overview of Social innovation Ecosystem Development (SEED)

## 54 organisations



Ministry

National public body

Sub-national public body

Research institute

NGO / Foundation

Enterprise

City

Chamber of commerce

### Greece

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Directorate General for Labour Relations, Health, Safety and Work Inclusion), Science for You (SciFY), Development Agency of Karditsa (AN.KA), KOLLEKTIVA
- Creative Thinking Development, Social Impact and Innovation, Stimmuli for Social Change

### Italy

- City of Torino
- Bologna University, European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (EURICSE), Giacomo Brodolini Foundation, Social Italy Foundation, Politecnico of Milano, Politecnico of Torino
- National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies, Agency for Territorial Cohesion - Managing Authority NOP Metropolitan Cities, Department for Cohesion Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - Managing Authority NOP Inclusion, Department of Public Administration of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Torino Chamber of Commerce, City of Bari, City of Naples, Naples Federico II University, University institute of European Studies, Nesta Italia, AICCON - Italian Association for the Promotion of the Culture of Co-operation and of Nonprofit, Urban Innovation Foundation, CRT Foundation, Human Foundation, Ashoka Italia, Assifero, Italian Association for cooperation and non-profit, Red Cross Italy, Cart'Armata - Fa' la cosa giusta, S-nodi, CGM - Gino Mattarelli cooperative group, IRIS NETWORK, Impact Hub Italy, Open Impact, Social Impact Agenda for Italy, Social Innovation Teams, Socialfare

■ Coordinator

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## Key contact points

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## Background

- The big societal challenges of social exclusion, poverty and discrimination, digital literacy gaps, digital imbalance, climate change and environmental degradation (plastic overuse, water waste, earth, sea and air pollution), deindustrialisation and the need for a just transition towards more sustainable living all require a collective effort to generate solutions. However, existing social innovation initiatives, actors, networks and communities do not always link effectively with one another. This project will encourage transnational exchanges of ideas, skills and best practices. A digital platform connecting the four countries will gather the best ideas and empower people to change their communities for the better.

## Activities planned at national level

### ◎ Greece

- Project partners will support the ESF+ Managing Authority to recognise, systematise, reinforce and institutionalise social innovation as a contextual legislative framework by scaling-up three completed projects that are already recognised as best practice.
- At city level, they will develop a platform (likely for Athens) to collect contributions from citizens' groups, creating a space for collaboration with city authorities.
- At regional level, the partners will support the Karditsa Development Agency, which unites small and medium-size organisations to create entrepreneurial opportunities for young, vulnerable and unemployed people.
- At national level, the partners will reinforce REBRAIN Greece, a digital portal to collect and process labour market data on needs, skills and opportunities in a rapidly changing labour market, together with launching ten official National Social Innovation Policy Labs.

### ◎ Italy

- The partners will develop a Policy Design Lab for the ESF managing authorities in Italy. Beginning with the municipality of Torino, the Lab will design and test a national social innovation policy embedded in a more innovative public sector.
- Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, the partners will engage people and businesses directly affected by societal problems in co-designing solutions.

- The partners will seek to reduce the distance between policy design and implementation through innovative processes that can envision policy impacts on the city ecosystem and design them accordingly.

### ◎ Slovenia

- Project partners will deliver an upgraded version of the existing Digital Social Innovation Lab, which was established within the Alpine Social Innovation Space (ASIS), in collaboration with the Noordung Centre.
- They will support the social innovation network with a themed Digital Social Innovation Lab to share knowledge and create opportunities for collaboration between business, academia and the public sector.
- The partners will enhance social actors' digital skills, creative and problem-solving capacities by engaging them in the transformation of their community.
- Slovenian partners are going to:
  - provide a virtual environment for collaboration
  - develop a collaborative platform for individuals, companies, communities and society to enhance their visibility and prompt a more proactive role in solving social innovation challenges and creating business opportunities
  - encourage peer-to-peer communication in order to establish a non-intermediary, efficient and cost-free business for members and customers.

## ◎ Romania

- The partners will embed Romania in a transnational ecosystem of knowledge sharing to identify innovative solutions suitable for the local context. They will focus on sharing social innovation knowledge and skills among the different public and private actors at local level, focusing on local communities.
- They will pursue funding to support social innovation through the use of private financial resources and innovative participatory/citizen-led financial tools, including the financial instruments developed by fonduri-structurale.ro and Ashoka Romania.

## National Advisory Boards

- In order to meet the needs of the ESF Managing Authorities, the four partner countries established National Advisory Boards. These working groups will include the ESF Managing Authorities, seeking their feedback on each step and thus ensuring their commitment to the co-design of competence centres. The open and flexible nature of the National Advisory Boards leaves space also to the participation of stakeholders and experts in the field of social innovation. The National Advisory Board will then prepare political and strategic guidance for the project, ensuring results and accountability.

## Activities planned at transnational level

- SEED will run three pilot projects for one year to: (i) monitor and assess social innovation implementation methodologies; (ii) feed insights into the co-design of national competence centres; (iii) release scalable solutions to support future actions of competence centres.
- SEED will build capacity by transferring know-how, tools and competencies for the development of social innovation to organisations and Member States with less developed social innovation ecosystems.
- SEED will seek to mainstream successful approaches, practices and evaluation criteria in policy design and implementation across participating Member States.

## Learning from Social Innovation Community (SIC)

- The Social Innovation Community is a useful network for the SEED partners in developing an effective approach to transnational cooperation. Running from 2016 to 2019, the SIC project gathered, activated and interlinked social innovation organisations and networks at European level, operating in the public sector, digital social innovation and the social economy, among others. The resources and connections developed by SIC will be valuable to SEED and to other competence centres.
- The SIC co-design methodology for social innovation - already tested by Torino as a pilot city - will be one of the tools applied in implementing the SEED pilot projects.

## Want to know more about other competence centres for social innovation?

More factsheets available on the [ESF+ website](#)



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