



Guidance note: Social Entrepreneurship Culture

Overview: what is meant by social entrepreneurship culture?

This policy guidance note describes different aspects and approaches to fostering a thriving social entrepreneurship culture. It is structured around good practice statements included in the action area “Social Entrepreneurship Culture” in the Social Entrepreneurship component of the Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool developed by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities and the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission: www.betterentrepreneurship.eu [1]

Social enterprises do not emerge and operate in a vacuum; a territory with a thriving civil society and social economy is more prone to foster social entrepreneurship. This is particularly true if existing social economy organisations and civil society initiatives have an entrepreneurial mind-set. To start understanding the social entrepreneurship culture in a territory, it is therefore useful to look at the presence of social economy organisations and civil society initiatives, which can provide an indication of the tendency among citizens to act in the general interest, even where there are no clear economic objectives. [1](#).

In addition, if there are already social economy organisations engaged in the delivery of services to citizens, and if there is a local tradition of companies serving collective interests (like for example mutual companies), this can also help to create favourable conditions for social enterprises to form, unlike in places where public bodies dominate service provision and companies tend to favour individual interests over group interests. Indeed, many social enterprises emerge from, and/or operate in the form of traditional social economy organisations like cooperatives, mutual companies and foundations.

Local traditions contributing to a thriving social entrepreneurship culture are not set in stone – they change and evolve over time. Education (both formal and non-formal learning) and research can play an important role here, helping to raise awareness, transmit knowledge and shape positive attitudes towards social entrepreneurship, including in public debates.

Statistical data can also help to demonstrate the economic and social impact of social enterprises and therefore enhance their visibility in a territory. Having a precise understanding of the state of play of social enterprises can further help to identify the necessary steps needed to support and promote them.

Policy levers for a thriving social entrepreneurship culture:

- Support the emergence of civil society initiatives and promote the possibility for them to transform into social enterprises.
- Develop awareness-raising campaigns on social entrepreneurship together with universities and other

stakeholders

- Include activities related to social entrepreneurship through formal and non-formal learning, and provide relevant training to teachers.
- Complement existing statistical data with data collection efforts specific to social enterprises.
- Support research specifically dedicated towards social enterprises.

Pitfalls to avoid

- Proposing social entrepreneurship approaches or models without considering the local entrepreneurship culture, and social economy and civil society traditions.
- Developing awareness-raising campaigns that are too technical to be understood by the general public.

Guidance per assessment statement

1.1. Active civil society and social economy organisations foster social entrepreneurship in your territory.

We invite you to assess the presence of civil society organisations and social economy organisations in your territory and the level of support that is being provided to citizen-led initiatives. A territory with a thriving civil society and social economy is more prone to foster social entrepreneurship

Why is it important?

An assessment of the presence of civil society and of social economy organisation on a territory can help decision makers and/or those wishing to develop a programme for social enterprises to design appropriate support schemes. It helps to better understand the broader context in which they will operate.

Social enterprises are often citizen-led, locally rooted, socio-economic initiatives aimed at tackling a societal challenge or respond to a local need. Indeed, social enterprises based on local initiative are likely to be well rooted in the local context, which may constitute their potential market. They also tend to have in-depth knowledge of the challenge to be dealt with, and consequently also of the main features their service/product should have in order to be successful. Finally, social enterprises typically benefit from wide-ranging support by other local players (for instance local donors). As such, they can be great agents for change.

To be effective in the pursuit of their mission, social enterprises benefit from interaction with the civil society and the other social economy organisations. Civil society – whether in the form of formally recognised organisations or spontaneous initiatives – sketch the profile of the local context in which social enterprises will operate. Civil society may also include funds or community foundations, which can be powerful instruments to back the development of social enterprises.

Finally, civil society and social economy organisations can help to identify and bring to the fore societal challenges and local needs that could be tackled by social enterprises, and can help new social enterprises to “find their place” in the local context, to not act in isolation.

In order to score high, in your context:

- Civil society is active.
- Social economy organisations are active.
- Support is provided to citizen-led initiatives for the creation of social economy organisations.

Good practice example

The Permanent Convention of Social Players (COPAS) (Italy)

Created under the Statute of the Tuscany Region, Italy, the permanent convention of social players (COPAS) brings together representatives from civil society organisations (associations) and social economy operators (social cooperatives) and is associated with the Regional Council. This body provides opinions on regional programmes and policy measures promoting social and economic cohesion. Moreover, COPAS plays a proactive role in monitoring the impact of regional public policies and measures. The establishment of COPAS responds to the need, identified by the regional authority, to involve representatives of civil society in policy making.

1.2. Raising-awareness activities are undertaken in your territory.

We invite you to consider the breadth of activities that are being undertaken in your territory in order to raise awareness and promote social entrepreneurship, such as contests or promotion campaigns for social entrepreneurs and social enterprises, through various channels of communication.

Why is it important?

Awareness-raising activities are key when it comes to promoting social entrepreneurship. Even if the social economy is rather well-known and established in the European socio-economic context, local communities can still have limited knowledge about social entrepreneurship, sometimes confusing it with other kinds of entrepreneurial approaches, like for example corporate social responsibility.

An effective way for local communities to become more familiar with social entrepreneurship and social enterprises is to have easy access to relevant, tailor-made information. This information can come from existing formal channels, such as specific sections within chambers of commerce or public bodies dealing with entrepreneurship or employment, thus targeting job-seekers and/or enterprises already established with a different legal form (e.g. for-profit, cooperative, etc.).

Awareness-raising can also be achieved through featured success stories of social entrepreneurs through traditional and online media channels (e.g. websites, social media, local press, radio, TV channels, etc.). This can inspire citizens and spur an interest among individuals or groups of citizens to form social enterprises, and then to discuss the path they followed, including challenges encountered and how they were overcome. Stories from the media can also simply inspire citizens to buy products and services from social enterprises.

“Entrepreneur-of-the-Year”-like contests can also give visibility to success stories and encourage people to follow inspiring model, including “Social-Entrepreneur-of-the-Year” and local contests that can provide a tailor-made, closer-to-the-target approach. Finally, events like conferences and forums provide chances for social entrepreneurs to meet and connect with each other and other relevant actors (see the good practice example below).

In order to score high, in your context:

- Social entrepreneurs are showcased as role models.
- Contests for social entrepreneurs are organised.
- Social enterprises are promoted through various communication channels (e.g. online, press, radio, local community media).

Good practice examples

Impact Summit (Germany)

The Impact Summit is one of the biggest social entrepreneurship conferences in Germany. The summit brings social entrepreneurs from all over Germany together and gives them a chance to connect with each other and with other stakeholders such as cooperation partners and investors. During the two-day summit everything is centred around social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social impact. More than 40 speakers of different backgrounds are actively involved, giving presentations, holding interactive discussions and organising workshops.

1.3. Education contributes to the development of positive attitudes towards social entrepreneurship.

We invite you to assess the degree to which education contributes to the development of positive attitudes towards social entrepreneurship in your territory. You can examine whether there are courses or activities that introduce the notion of social entrepreneurship through formal education and non-formal learning, including how social enterprises work and contribute both to the society and to the economy. Finally, you can consider whether teachers receive the necessary training to support these activities.

Why is it important?

Education plays a significant role in developing positive attitudes towards social entrepreneurship and can help to foster understanding of its specific functioning and role in society. Indeed, through education, students can learn how social enterprises work and contribute both to social and economic outcomes. In addition, it can provide students with opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial competences more generally, contributing to personal development, active participation in society, employment prospects and to business creation. An effective way to promote social entrepreneurship is therefore to embed it into formal education (i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary education) and non-formal learning. At the higher education level, there have been an increasing number of courses and programmes developed related to social entrepreneurship in recent years. However, there is still space for improvement among younger students. One option is to invite social entrepreneurs to present concrete examples of social enterprises to for example secondary education students, or to include professions related to social entrepreneurship in career orientation classes (see good practice example below).

Another option is to have social entrepreneurship education programmes already from late primary education, inviting students to tackle social and environmental challenges for example through the creation of a “mini” social enterprise together with their classmates. Teachers play a significant role here, and need to be adequately trained.

In order to score high, in your context:

- Social entrepreneurship is promoted through formal education (i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary education) and non-formal learning.
- Higher education institutions have programmes on social entrepreneurship.

Good practice example

JA Europe: Social Enterprise Programme (Multiple Countries)

In 2011, JA Europe created the [Social Enterprise Programme \(SEP\)](#). [2]The objective of SEP was to increase the pool of potential social entrepreneurs, by providing social-enterprise education to young people across Europe aged 15-18. The 26-week Programme brought together the worlds of education, training, skills, work and the community closer together, to inspire and recognise young social entrepreneurs.

Student teams participating in SEP spent between two and four hours every week in the classroom or performing an after-school activity. Led by a SEP guide and mentored throughout the year by a volunteer business advisor at regular mini-company meetings, the student teams created their social enterprise and submitted their business plans online. They also made a four-minute video presentation and uploaded it onto YouTube. A national panel of judges from the private sector selected a winner to create awareness about social entrepreneurship. At the European level, the national winners submitted a business plan, a four-minute video presentation in English, and an advertisement promoting their social enterprise to an online panel of international judges, who selected the European winner. SEP was the result of a partnership between JA Europe, ArcelorMittal, FERD and Intel; 14 200 students participated in the Programme between 2011 and 2015.

For further information, please see [JA Europe: Social Enterprise Programme \(Multiple Countries\)](#) [3]

Young Entrepreneurs at School Initiative (Italy)

In Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), the *Young Entrepreneurs at School* initiative was created by a partnership composed of the regional secondary school administration and the regional branch of the cooperative association Confcooperative. Students learn how to set up a cooperative enterprise, following a step-by-step project helping them to: 1) identify a need to be dealt with in their territory; 2) define and organise the work-flow to produce a good or service to respond to such a need; 3) get organised as a group, draft a statute, elect the management and draft a business plan; 4) meet with already established cooperative enterprises; 5) start-up their own business. As an option, students participating in the programme can have internships with cooperatives in the region.

1.4. Universities and/or the academia are active in the field of social entrepreneurship.

We invite you consider what is the role of universities and the academia in promoting social entrepreneurship by participating in the public debate. We also ask you to examine how active researchers are in their efforts to develop the evidence base in the field of social entrepreneurship and in sharing their knowledge through European and international networks.

Why is it important?

Universities and the academia can play a key role in promoting and developing the evidence base for social

entrepreneurship. This can be done through offering individual courses or entire programmes dedicated to social entrepreneurship, which can help to breed an entrepreneurial mind-set for tackling social challenges, and develop the necessary skills for pursuing such endeavours. Moreover, developing the research agenda around social entrepreneurship helps its establishment as an academic field in its own right, while generating new knowledge and raising awareness. Finally, given the diversity of social entrepreneurship traditions and cultures within and across countries, research networks at national and international levels can stimulate mutual learning and sharing of knowledge.

In order to score high, in your context:

- Universities or other research institutions participate in promoting social entrepreneurship, including in the public debate.
- There is ongoing research regarding social entrepreneurship.
- Researchers are connected to European/international networks.

Good practice examples

Social Entrepreneurship Akademie (Germany)

The [Social Entrepreneurship Akademie](#) [4] aims to raise awareness and provide solutions where entrepreneurial thinking and action can spur social innovation in a sustainable manner. In 2010, the Social Entrepreneurship Akademie was established as a joint initiative by four university-based entrepreneurship centres in Munich. Under the slogan Education for Societal Change, this unique network organisation educates social entrepreneurs or social change makers. It also instils entrepreneurial thinking in all disciplines.

Hilfswerft (Germany)

[Hilfswerft](#) [5] facilitates societal change by connecting entrepreneurs, companies, social entrepreneurs and universities to multiply social impact. Hilfswerft organizes various events on universities and other higher education institutions in order to promote the concept of social entrepreneurship and put forward social enterprises as potential employers, seeking to strengthen awareness of the sector and its advantages.

1.5. Statistical data are collected for social enterprises.

We invite you to examine whether actions have been undertaken either by the public sector or other entities in your territory to build the evidence base and gather statistical information regarding social enterprises.

Why is it important?

Statistical data can provide a precise picture of the state of play of social enterprises in a territory, including their evolution over time. Regular collection of data helps to keep track of the number of social enterprises, as well as to understand the legal forms they take, their fields of activity, as well as their contribution to the national economy and labour market. With such information, policy makers and relevant stakeholders can make informed decisions about the potential support needed to stimulate the development of social enterprises. What is more, statistical data can raise the profile social enterprises by demonstrating their contribution both to the economy and society.

Despite these benefits, statistical data on social enterprises remain scarce. This is partly due to the common lack of consensus around the definition of social enterprise, as well as around questions of impact measurement.

Nevertheless, over the last ten years national statistics bodies have made increasing efforts to collect data on social enterprises. One available option in this regard is the creation of satellite accounts, which allows attention to be focused on the social economy, while being linked to the central accounts (see the good practice example below). Moreover, registration of social enterprises in public registers or at chambers of commerce (whether dedicated to social enterprises or not) also helps to increase the availability of data. For example, registration can be made a prerequisite for social enterprises wishing to start activities. Lastly, regional representative bodies or networks may establish initiatives for collecting specific information on social enterprises.

In order to score high, in your context:

- Public authorities regularly collect statistical data on social enterprises.
- Other organisations collect/use and analyse data on social enterprises.

Good practice example

Satellite Account (Portugal)

The national institute for statistics of Portugal regularly collects information on the social economy at the national level through the use of a [Satellite Account](#) [6]. The Satellite Account allows having a precise picture of the state-of-play of social economy organisations. For example it shows that, in 2013, the social economy represented 2.8% of national GVA and 5.2% of total employment.

The implementation of this satellite account is the result of a lengthy multi-step process which proved to be essential to capture the evolutions of the social economy field. Over a period of ten years, Portugal has extended the scope of its satellite account from non-profit institutions to cover the whole spectrum of the social economy, including cooperatives and mutual associations, and more recently to voluntary work. This was done based on the methodological approach presented both in the UN Handbook on Non-profit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work in the System of National Accounts and the CIRIEC Manual for drawing up the satellite accounts of companies in the social economy: cooperatives and mutual societies. The advantage of a satellite account is to exploit the data available in the System of National Accounts without conducting complementary surveys.

Source URL: <https://betterentrepreneurship.eu/en/node/54>

Links

[1] <https://www.betterentrepreneurship.eu/>

[2] <http://jaeurope.org/mobile/events-list/upcoming-events/358-past-event/37-ja-marketplace-lithuania.html>

[3] <https://betterentrepreneurship.eu/en/node/35>

[4] <http://www.seakademie.de/>

[5] <https://www.hilfswerft.de/>

[6]

https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=278817467&