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# COMPARATIVE REPORT ON SI IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The comparative analysis report at hand is an analysis of the Social Innovation Ecosystems of the four participating countries, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and Romania. The scope of the report is to describe the main elements of the existing social innovation ecosystems in a comparative manner and thus present their similarities and differentiation in a number of issues. Based on the data collected and the activities carried out, the report is structured in order to assess, in particular: a) the existing discourse, practises and tools of SI; b) the principal stakeholders; c) the main drivers and possible barriers for the promotion and mainstreaming of social innovation in each country.

This report follows Task 1.1 and Task 1.2. which concerned the top-down and bottom-up collection of Social Innovation projects in the respective countries. However, as it's already stated in the National Reports that are accompanying this analysis, the mapping exercise is a continuous process as the ecosystem is dynamic, operates and produces outcomes continuously. Therefore, the report is “a picture of the moment”, a current state of affairs of the projects that were mapped and recorded. In addition, since the mapping did not include any qualitative survey, the qualitative elements of this report are from desk research and cumulative discussions of the partners of the consortium.

This report is organised as follows: Section 1 describes the state of Social Innovation in the countries, giving an introductory picture on the use of the term, the methodology used for the mapping, the consortiums' discussions at the national level for the tentative objectives of the competence centres, the actors involved and the ongoing processes of transformation and capacity building. Within this section, we report more information about the previous mapping activities of top-down and bottom-up projects. Section 2 focuses on the thematic areas of Social Innovation: 1) Circular economy and environment, 2) Digital transformations and smart cities, 3) Health, 4) Education, 5) Cultural heritage and creative industries, 6) Poverty, 7) Migration, 8) Urban regeneration, 9) Welfare and work. For each area, we describe the objectives of innovative projects, their territorial context and the tools used to implement the projects. Section 3 presents the actors of social innovation divided into five main categories: Citizens and social movements; Social economy actors; Private companies and incubators/accelerators; Universities and research centres; Public Institutions. As in the case of thematic areas, firstly we describe each type of actor, then we report the type of projects each of the stakeholders implemented. In Section 4, we discuss the existing drivers and barriers for social innovation in the participating countries and we present possible suggestions for future policy implementation. Finally, section 5 summarises the features of the ecosystems of social innovations and it concludes by describing the potential future tasks of the national competence centres.

# 1 STATE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

## 1.1 Definition of SI, New Action Plan for Social Economy and New SI Competence Centres

The objective of the SEED (Social Innovation Ecosystem Development) project is to design and support the establishment of four competence centres for social innovation in Greece, Italy, Romania, and Slovenia. These competence centres will involve researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and civil servants to support the national European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authorities (MAs) in fostering the development of social innovation in their countries.

### 1.1.1 Definition of Social Innovation in the SEED project

Before starting to collect the data, we developed the methodology, the data collection tools and agreed on the definitions.

In terms of definitions, we have discussed in particular the definition of Social Innovation. Among the many definitions available we decided to adopt the most recent definition used in official European documents:

‘Social innovation’ means an activity, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practises and models, that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act. REGULATION (EU) 2021/1057 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No. 1296/2013.

Clarification of the connection between social economy, social enterprises and social innovation is very important to better understand the subsequent comparative report. Over the last decade, there has been a progressive shift in policy debate from a social enterprise focus towards a wider understanding of the social economy. This shift has coincided with the parallel enlargement of the scope of social enterprises tackling specific social challenges to pursuing the well-being of individuals and communities as an overarching goal (OECD report on Boosting Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise development in Slovenia, 2022, p. 25).

OECD refers to the social economy as the set of associations, cooperatives, mutual organisations, foundations and, more recently, social enterprises, whose activity is driven by values of solidarity, the primacy of people over capital, and democratic and participative governance (OECD report on Boosting Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise development in Slovenia, 2022, p. 21).

Social enterprises extend the scope of the social economy beyond its traditional forms. Similar to the OECD definition of social enterprise, the European Commission understands a social enterprise as an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social

objectives (OECD report on Boosting Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise development in Slovenia, 2022, p. 21).

Most stakeholders tend to use the concepts of social enterprise, social innovation and social entrepreneurship interchangeably. In the capacity building exercise within the SEED project, we will facilitate a shared understanding of the concepts through enhancing knowledge of each of them.

### **1.1.2 Recap and relevance of the New Action Plan for Social Economy: Building an economy that works for people**

On December 9th, 2021, European Commission presented an Action Plan to help the European social economy thrive, tapping into its economic and job-creation potential, as well as its contribution to a fair and inclusive recovery, and the green and digital transitions. Action Plan highlights that social economy organisations are entities which put social and environmental purposes first, reinvesting most of their profit back into the organisation. There are 2.8 million social economy entities in Europe that employ 13.6 million people, and which offer solutions to key challenges in our societies. Social economy entities span a diverse range of sectors and forms, from care services to recycling; from cooperatives to social enterprises. Enhanced support to the social economy not only creates jobs but also allows organisations to increase their social impact across the EU.

The Commission proposes to act in three areas:

#### **1. Creating the right conditions for the social economy to thrive**

Policy and legal frameworks are key in creating the right environment for the social economy to thrive. This includes taxation, public procurement and State aid frameworks that have to be adapted to the needs of the social economy.

To address these issues, the Commission will propose a Council Recommendation on developing the social economy framework conditions in 2023. It will also publish guidance for the Member States on taxation frameworks for social economy organisations and facilitate easier access to guidance on State aid. The Action Plan also aims to improve good practice on socially responsible public procurement and promote the targeting of the social economy outside EU borders.

#### **2. Opening opportunities for social economy organisations to start-up and scale-up**

Social economy entities should benefit from business development support to start-up and develop, as well as to reskill and upskill their workers. For 2021-2027, the Commission is aiming to increase its support beyond the estimated €2.5 billion allocated to the social economy previously (2014-2020).

Among other actions, the Commission will launch a new EU Social Economy Gateway in 2023 to ensure social economy actors can find all the information they need in one place on EU funding, policies, training and initiatives. It will also launch new financial products in 2022 under the InvestEU programme and improve access to funding. In 2022, the Commission will also set up a European Competence Centre for Social Innovation.

#### **3. Making sure the social economy and its potential are recognised**

The Action Plan aims to make the social economy more visible and improve the recognition of its work and potential. The Commission will carry out communication activities emphasising the role and specificities of the social economy. Furthermore, the Commission will launch a study to collect qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the social economy across the EU. It will also organise training courses for public officials on various topics with relevance for the social economy, promote the social economy at regional and local levels by fostering cross-border exchanges, and much more.

In the Action Plan chapter: Boosting social innovation, it is defined: »Social innovation offers new ways of producing goods, organising and delivering services and new forms of civic participation responding to concrete social needs or societal challenges. It changes social relations and can offer new policy approaches, potentially leading to systemic changes. By operating in a bottom-up way and being close to communities, citizens and the problems they face, social economy entities have the capacity to find innovative solutions."

#### Boosting social innovation Chapter highlights:

- In recent years Commission has launched various initiatives to promote social innovation: e.g. through Horizon 2020 including the European Social Innovation Competition, EaSI or ESF
- Support for Social Outcomes Contracting has also been provided as a way of experimenting with social innovation and finance.
- The Commission will continue with these initiatives and build a European community of social innovators to foster peer learning and joint entrepreneurial ventures, expanding on the Alumni Network of the European Social Innovation Competition.
- Scaling social innovations remains a challenge, including succeeding in having them taken up by policymakers, finding partners in other territories, either nationally or abroad, and adapting the solutions developed elsewhere to local conditions. This results in missed opportunities to achieve systemic impact and realise the full potential of the initial investment (often including public funding)
- The Commission is supporting the setting up of national competence centres for social innovation in order to boost the innovation capacities including of social economy actors and new social entrepreneurs.
- There is also scope for enhancing collaborations between the public sector, philanthropic and social investment actors, to better catalyse available resources and enable the uptake and replication of social innovation.



### Regarding Social Innovations, The Commission will:

- Boost social innovation through a new approach to transnational cooperation under the ESF+. A new »European Competence Centre for Social Innovation will be set up in 2022. It will organise mutual learning and capacity building for the relevant authorities and support structures. In addition, a New scheme of grants facilitating the transfer and/or scaling up social innovation will be set up.
- Propose in 2022 a European Social Innovation Catalyst Fund under Horizon Europe engaging citizens, academics, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, impact investors and public administrators, with the aim of supporting the replication and scaling of successful social innovations to advance the objectives of the EU Missions.

In addition, the Commission will provide grants under Horizon Europe to raise awareness and ease the access of social entrepreneurs to the resources of pan-European, national, regional and local innovation ecosystems.

### **1.1.3 State of SI in each SEED project partner country**

#### **DEFINITION**

In Greece, Social Innovation (SI) is a rather new concept; therefore, the definition of SI is different between stakeholders and the overall perception of the concept is still mixed and debated. The Law 4430/2016 on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) defines SI as “the production of products or provision of services, which targets the satisfaction of social needs, the reconciliation of production and consumption, the harmonisation of supply and demand and the development of a new type of social relationships based on equality and collectivity and not in competition”.

In Italy, social innovation is an umbrella term, which identifies new and emerging social practices. The concept of “ecosystem of social innovation” is much more recent and its use is increasing only in the last ten years.

The social innovation ecosystem in Romania is still in a nascent state. The concept of “social innovation” (SI) is still widely unknown for both the private and public sectors. An acute need for knowledge transfer in this field is seen at all societal levels – from general awareness to building actual innovative solutions. SI is mainly driven by private social innovators that are implementing locally based initiatives, contributing to solving social problems usually identified in a local community.

The concept of social economy (SE) and social innovation (SI) is relatively new to Slovenia. The first study on the topic of social entrepreneurship (only) was conducted in 2004. The terms were later used in the context of ESF funded pilot projects launched in 2009 to support the development of social enterprises. The first definition of social innovation has been introduced in the Act on Social Entrepreneurship in 2011 and it states: ‘social innovations are solutions to societal needs and problems for which the market and the public sector have no answer.’ The concept of SI in Slovenia is very much connected to and understood as solutions that come from the bottom-up and deal with societal challenges on one side and (top-down) as solutions that the government addresses with its policies to help those in need.

## PUBLIC DISCOURSE

There is a general understanding in Greece that SI is related but not exclusively connected to Social Economy, that SI is bringing results therefore it is needed, that SI has to do, in general, with “society” and the “new”. This very vague definition of SI is brought to the public dialogue by several articles in the media about actions that NGOs or other Social Economy actors or even private companies are taking in the social sphere that is characterised as SI.

In the Italian media, the term “social innovation” is used as a catch-phrase to gain readers’ attention, without deepening the reasons why a certain practice or project is defined as socially innovative. Indeed, during the last years, civil society and private enterprises have really fostered the development of social innovations. With respect to the role of civil society, we refer to the 2017 so-called Third sector reform, which underlined the central role of third sector actors (above all, social cooperatives and social enterprises) in generating and facilitating new partnerships to foster social innovation.

NGO/civil society sector in Romania is the first to drive SI. NGOs are doing a lot of work in identifying specific problems in the communities they represent within their mission and given their lean structure they propose innovative solutions for tackling specific problems. Social entrepreneurs play an essential role in developing the social innovation ecosystem in Romania. An important role in developing the national and local social innovation ecosystem is played by multiple support organisations that facilitate knowledge sharing and ecosystem building. The increasing influence of international support organisations is noticed (like Ashoka, present in Romania since 2017).

The organisation of the first Slovenian Social Innovation Competition in 2012, which saw over 50 social innovation projects participate, was an important step that promoted SI and placed it on the agenda for the first time. The increasing popularity of SI can now be noticed by the number of responses submitted to different calls and tenders for funding from public sources (both national and local) where SI is often listed as a key selection criterion. There is however no harmonised methodology for evaluating SI projects.

## POLITICAL AND ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

The political discourse in Greece about SI is currently marginal both at the national and local level, or, whenever there is a reference, it is clearly done within different contexts, without any alignment to the definitions mentioned above. On the other hand, Academia is slowly responding to this new concept, providing courses on SI under postgraduate studies, but also with research projects focusing on SI concepts and approaches, given the relevant available EU financing. The recent financial crisis in Greece developed an overall narrative of great social needs that must be satisfied. The ecosystem of 3rd sector actors has increased, and more and more actors are intervening in a variety of social needs that exist in the country.

Within the scientific literature, social innovation is mentioned mainly in the fields of welfare services and policies, urban regeneration and design. The innovative and social “good practises” are numerous in Italy. However, long-term analysis about their impact on territories and communities started only a few years ago. Coming to the role of institutional actors, most of the policies and programmes aimed at fostering social innovations are implemented at the local level: first, by municipalities and metropolitan cities; second, by regions.

SI is present on the Romanian media agenda whenever stakeholders have achievements or communicate on the subject. SI is mentioned in all calls for proposals under the current ESF financial period in Romania. There is little to no guidance on how to develop social innovation activities in the projects and no formal follow-up on the actual measures implemented is made. The authorities have no coherent policy on this matter. The Law on Social Economy is in place since 2015, but it makes no references to SI.

The Government of Slovenia is increasingly interested in using work integration social enterprises (WISE) as a tool for tackling high levels of structural unemployment. Against this backdrop, Slovenia adopted the Act on Social Entrepreneurship in 2011 which among other things, provides a definition of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise (p.40, Social Entrepreneurship: Case of Slovenia, N. Tomaževič, A. Aristovnik, Ljubljana, oktober 2018). Until January 1st, 2015 the main responsibility for the design and implementation of policies, support instruments and measures for social enterprises and infrastructures as well as for the implementation of the Social Entrepreneurship Act lay with the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSAEO). At that time the field of social entrepreneurship was shifted under the patronage of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (MEDT). Among other things, the MEDT provides expert support to the Council for Social Entrepreneurship, maintains a register of social enterprises and organises events on social entrepreneurship.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

In Greece, the migration crisis as well as the overall transformation to a more Green and Digital society have built up the narrative of unmet social needs that need to be addressed. Therefore, several actions are taking place and many of them are innovative, but few of them are building relationships, or creating collaborations. This is in general understandable since one might say that overall, the 3rd sector ecosystems in Greece are new and have been enriched in a short (and difficult) period, therefore their maturity is low. On the other hand, there are many actors that operate, many activities that are designed and implemented in many different themes, and there is an overall optimism that this is a good first step towards a more mature and interactive SI Ecosystem.

Among the infrastructural conditions in Italy soft and hard infrastructure can be found, both territorial and digital ones. Within an “ecosystem” of social innovation, different planning, skills, resources and knowledge converge into a whole that aims to redefine the fundamentals of development policies, in particular in sectors such as urban planning, living, cultural production, tourism and also welfare (Zandonai 2017; Aiccon 2018). Indeed, a relevant characteristic of social innovation ecosystems is the ability to cross over the traditional borders of different policy and service sectors, on the one hand, and the traditional division between public, private and civil society’s sectors, on the other hand, in order to develop integrated strategies and interventions (among others Falomi and De Giorgio 2018; Galeotti 2021). For this reason, ecosystems of social innovation consist of multisectoral and multilevel collaborative relationships for the co-creation of value (Città di Torino 2019). The active participation of singular citizens or informal/formal groups of them is valuable in fostering social changes (Moro 2012; 2013; Polizzi and Vitale 2017). As well, the public administrations of big cities, such as Milano, Turin, Bologna, Bari and Palermo, are reshaping their role in order to shift from being providers of financial resources and regulators of the legislative framework to being active orchestrators of the system.

In the approved Resilience and Recovery Plan, Romania proposed a complete reform of the social economy sector (including modifications to the current law). Usually, SI in Romania is linked to tackling the problems of disadvantaged groups. With this reform, there is hope it changes significantly.

In Slovenia SI is being mentioned in the university discourses as well as in certain ministries and municipalities, and it is believed this is mostly due to the EU projects these organisations are involved in, as well as the new EU policies being much more inclined to deal with and develop social innovation ecosystems in the next financial perspective. The Ministry of Economic development and technology has also started a process of developing a social impact measuring tool, that should come into effect in 2023.

#### **1.1.4 Objectives of the future development of SI ecosystems and the initial ideas of SI competence centres in SEED partner countries**

In this chapter, the idea of national competence centres is being summarised. We would like to stress that the SEED project is taking all the countries through the process of co-creating the SI competence centres with local stakeholders, so the descriptions you will see below are taken out of the project proposal and are representing first visions only. The final result of the project will be national pilots that will be implemented by the end of 2023.

#### **GREECE**

The first step towards the elaboration of Social Innovation (SI) in Greece, is the creation of a fruitful institutional political environment through the unification and alignment at legal level of all diverse laws and policies under one main inclusive strategy that connects all the stakeholders and policies into one interlinked programme and action plan. This will allow sectoral policies (i.e. the ones for rural development and therefore, both agricultural and urban cooperatives active in rural areas) to flourish as well, under one common policy document, without the current competitive and partial handling. This will also allow for commonly regulated registries and mappings of actions and stakeholders. A common registry for the 3rd sector actors is needed for the proper enhancement of all stakeholders and collaboration among them for social innovation actions. A unified codification of Social Innovation is also needed at the legal level so that a minimum common ground of understanding among stakeholders can exist. Thus, SI will be more effectively included in other national policies and strategies. The networks between the stakeholders should also be enhanced and assisted for the exchange of good practices and knowledge at the local, national and European levels. Cooperation among public, private and 3rd sector actors should be encouraged, facilitated, and moderated, for the elaboration of socially innovative actions and actors. Citizens' participation should be assisted and encouraged, and non-formal actors and networks of the alternative economy should also be represented and recognized at the legal level for actions of SI, including the possibility for funding. The creation of a Social Innovation Fund will be of utmost assistance for SI actions, and this could be done through the Hellenic Development Bank which manages other similar funds for other sectors of the economy, i.e. green innovation, digital innovation, etc. Similarly, the life cycle of funding-financing availability should be explored in order to overcome the "inability" of public/local authorities to identify different funding needs and employ different structured funding and tools/instruments for SI.

Evaluation methodologies for both the actions and the ecosystem, in general, are under debate and elaboration through the current preparatory project. This is an ongoing activity and should be one of the future operations of the competence centre.

The Objective of the Greek Social Innovation Lab will be to enable the Social Innovation Ecosystem in Greece to develop and thrive and thus to support Social Cohesion, Societal development and fair transition. Its mission will be the co-construction and co-production, through an ecosystem approach and inclusive practices, of a functional, enabling, efficient and effective Social Innovation (SI) Lab that will have the overarching priorities to:

- Provide assistance (i.e. capacity building, studies, mentoring, networking, etc) to the SI Actors to design, implement, and scale up SI activities,
- Monitor and research the SI ecosystem,
- Transfer know-how and experiences within the ecosystem and towards the Public, Social Economy and Private sector,
- Identify problems and provide solutions especially through the design and assessment of public policy actions
- Act as an intermediate between SI actors, and facilitate their networking, collaboration and synergies

## ITALY

The development of the Italian ecosystem should be based on the participation of citizens and stakeholders both in the phase of need assessment and in the phase of co-producing projects and services. The existing Italian multi-level governance permits to represent and scale-up the needs of communities and territories. So, the emerging logic of the Italian ecosystem can be represented as a network of smaller ecosystems developed at the metropolitan and regional levels. This feature relates to the Italian territorial configuration, but it is also due to the implicit nature of social innovations, which generates locally. However, the implementation of national strategies can favour and support the development and diffusion of local social innovations.

Another relevant factor that the Italian ecosystem should count on is a large number of second-level organisations, representing numerous and various social economy actors widespread in the whole national territory. These actors are intermediaries - a sort of brokers - between the local micro-networks and national and European actors.

These local networks should not be closed bubbles, but they should be open to interacting/communicating with each other and with higher institutional levels. Within networks, partnerships might be the most efficient tools to strengthen stakeholders' collaborations, favouring a dynamic evolution of the whole ecosystem.

Concerning the assessment of the ecosystem's social impact, every stakeholder should develop a reflexive approach about its own level of agency, in order to evaluate its actions and to reframe them in light of an improvement. For this reflective exercise, a qualitative and quantitative approach with detailed indicators could be useful.

Within this context, the Italian competence centre should be the facilitator and catalyst of the transformative and adaptive process which each stakeholder of the ecosystem is involved in. In

other words, the competence centre can help the ecosystem to be dynamic, favouring continuous learning and evolution and avoiding the rigidity of formal structures.

The centre could be:

- The intermediary actor between the second level organisations and the public actors, working at the national and European level.
- The co-designer of capacity building programmes in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the competence centre could have the function of facilitating the communication and diffusion of social innovations at the national level.

## ROMANIA

In order to be better communicated, social innovation (SI) needs to be better understood. The current status-quo of communicating SI includes one page of information in the applicant's guide in all ESF funded calls for proposals in Romania. This one page of information includes the general definition of SI at the European level and general examples of SIs, that in most cases are not relevant for the call's objective. This triggers a lot of confusion at the level of potential applicants that must dedicate a fraction of their project's budget to SI activities. There is no coherent system to report the work actually done in the awarded projects in the field of SI and the evaluation of the proposals still lacks substance when assessing the proposed SI.

Proposals:

- Capacity building for all stakeholders in the SI ecosystem (including public authorities managing funds for social innovators)
- Dedicated financing opportunities for SI through ESF+
- Coherent reporting system for SI projects financed through ESF+
- National database of best practises in social innovation
- Public campaign of promoting results of successful projects

Competence centre:

The aim of the Romanian national competence centre should be to support the social ecosystem to develop further. Given the fact that the Romanian national competence centre is run by a single privately-owned company together with associate partners, it is clear that the capacity of the competence centre should first be enhanced. It can then:

- provide training services for all the stakeholders in the ecosystem;
- gather valuable data on the needs of the ecosystem that could serve as important guidance in creating future calls for proposals;
- play an important role in promoting SI through the Structural Funds Gala communication campaign;
- facilitate the creation of new partnerships in the ecosystem;
- provide support for the managing authority in evaluating SI projects.



Given the nascent state of SI in Romania, a methodology for assessing SI impact is needed. At the same time, given the growing interest of different stakeholders to become involved in the SI ecosystem is a good opportunity to elaborate and execute a plan for binding and developing the SI ecosystem. It is crucial for ecosystem development that alternative financing instruments & sustainable acceleration programs for social innovators are created and piloted: civic crowdfunding, social bonds etc.

## SLOVENIA

A weak political will to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation can be noted. On the other hand, Slovenia has a very strong ICT and technology ecosystem as well as business incubators and technology park networks that can be used as resources in building up the Social Innovation (support) ecosystem. Regional development agencies are local administration support organisations that will need to be involved in the process of building up an SI ecosystem. What is seen as the next step is the development and maintenance of networks, capacity building and the creation of awareness to increase acceptance in various stakeholder groups.

If public actors have been historically recognized as the guarantors of the general interest, many "private" actors also participate actively and effectively in the social utility and transition of societies, whether they are organised in associations, cooperatives, companies or as mere citizens. The objective is to bring these two poles closer together, to establish a relationship of trust and to weave pragmatic collaborations, to serve the people and to respond to challenges.

Slovenian Digital SI Lab will represent an upgraded solution of the existing SI platform ecosystem in Slovenia, which was established within the ASIS project (Alpine space social innovation project), supported by the expert group and implemented by Center Noordung in Slovenia. It will be upgraded by virtual solution, which will serve as a supportive environment and tool for creation, initiation, development, and implementation of the innovative ideas, projects, and undertakings to the market, for achieving social impact through social innovations.

Besides market realization, the main focus of SI Lab should be to create an impact on the economy and society. Digital SI Lab will support the network as a substantial part of the ecosystem, composed of four main groups of stakeholders - businesses, including start-ups, conventional businesses, and social economy enterprises; academia and institutions, including RDI institutions (public and private) and educational services; government – Ministry of Economic Development and Technology as an intermediate body for ESF+ in the field of SI and other relevant ministries and agencies, institutions, founded by the state, as well as civil society – communities and individuals, NGOs and other forms of informal collaboration.

Committed stakeholders are needed to achieve the goal and a cross-sectoral perspective is needed to cover the broadest possible spectrum of needs and fields that are to be improved and changed to fit the new values system.

## 1.2 Methodology and Implementation of mapping practice

### 1.2.1 Recap of the Logical Framework

The mapping practice has been done in the second half of 2021 and shows the current state of each partner country. It is also a work in progress that will continue all through the project until May 2023. It was an inclusive exercise, where projects and initiatives that met specific social

challenges and used socially innovative methods and tools were part of this exercise. It must also be stressed that the timeline of the exercise prevented us from mapping all national cases, and the results we show in the comparative report are an approximate picture of the status quo.

The first steps of the project required the partners to research the existing SI ecosystem. We had to establish the current state of play in each country, including the actors, the initiatives, support systems, funding mechanisms, impact measurements and in this document, we aim to compare the 4 countries respectively. In the first step, partners created a specific country report that included State of Social Innovation, Thematic areas of Social Innovation, Stakeholders of Social Innovation, Drivers and barriers for Social Innovations and a conclusion that reflected on the future development of ecosystems of social innovation in each of the 4 partner countries.

In the specific country report, the first task was to collect the definition and the current state of Social Innovation in each country (Greece, Romania, Slovenia, Italy). The aim was to develop a representation of values, purposes and guidelines which will be relevant to maintain and foster the national (Greek, Romanian, Slovenian and Italian) ecosystems, on the one hand, and to generate new ecosystems of Social Innovation in other European countries.

In the second part of the specific country report, the focus was on the thematic areas of Social Innovation, classifying all the mapped projects (both bottom-up and top-down) according to the following subdivision: Circular economy and environment, Digital transformation and smart cities, Health, Education, Cultural heritage and creative industries, Poverty, Migration, Urban regeneration, Welfare and work. For each thematic area, we were describing the specific elements, namely Societal and cultural discourse, Objectives, Territorial context and Tools (methodologies, approaches) which the social innovations use.

In the next step, the focus was on the stakeholders of Social Innovation, classifying all the mapped projects (both bottom-up and top-down) according to the following subdivisions: Citizens and social movements, Social economy actors (Associations, Cooperatives (including social cooperatives), Social enterprises, Foundations, Mutuels), Private companies, Incubators, accelerators, etc., Universities and research institutions, public institutions and agencies (Local, Regional, National, European), Multi-stakeholders and Others. Here we were describing each stakeholder and their role in the SI ecosystem, as well as the relationships between the different stakeholders that form the SI ecosystem in each partner country.

In addition, we reflected on drivers and barriers which have emerged from the existing Social Innovations in each partner country and which might contribute to the development of ecosystems of Social Innovations. Some of the elements covered were: awareness for SI, Funding, Legislation, Role of the local government, Capacity building and competencies, Role of civil society and social economy actors and others that might be specific to each country. In this chapter, each country also proposed some policy recommendations that would help to implement the national policies of each country to promote and mainstream Social Innovation.

In the final section, the aim was to summarise what has emerged so far and to advance proposals and suggestions for the development and, subsequently, the maintenance of social innovation ecosystems. Here we also included a reflection on the ideas of the new national competence centres which aim to be established in each country. Specific actions of future competence centres are listed, along with the specific role they should play in the development of the social innovation ecosystem.



The comparative document uses the same logic to analyse the four national ecosystems and to expose the similarities and differences of each of the countries SI realities.

### 1.2.2 The mapping process

The mapping process was conducted in two steps. There are two very different sources of social innovations/initiatives and that is the reason that it was decided to create both bottom-up and top-down mapping of the national ecosystems.

In the bottom-up collection process, the partners agreed on the creation of a database composed of two different worksheets: 1. The first sheet with social innovation projects and the related organisations (both non-profit, profit, and hybrid) and 2. A second one lists supporting organisations, defined as the organisations that do not introduce social innovations directly but support other organisations or groups introducing social innovations (i.e. social incubators and social accelerators). The first worksheet was structured into 3 macro-areas: Organization information, Social innovation description and Impact and support. The second worksheet was designed to contain information on the Supporting Organisations for the development of SI: social incubator, social accelerator, social investment platform, community, and networks, etc. a distinction was made between profit and non-profit organisations, and information was collected about the year of establishment of the organisation, the location, its website, and the relative impact area. The data collection was mainly based on the knowledge of the project partners and the supporting organisations. Desk research was conducted for the existing databases, the scientific literature, the grey literature, and the web. Direct contact was established with certain SI actors according to the specific project partner possibilities.

With the analysis of the institutional contexts (top-down mapping), the aim was to identify and map institutional actors representing potential in order to create the conditions for commitment in the development of SI competence centres. The goal was to build a map of public actors, projects (top-down initiatives) and public funds that will be useful in the subsequent phases of the project. We mapped the public institutions that are: formed by the government to provide services to the public, backed through public funds and controlled by public officials or their appointees. These are, in particular, all constitutional bodies at all levels of government, including administrative and tax agencies, independent administrative authorities, bodies producing economic services, regions and provinces, local authorities and other institutional types such as Chambers of Commerce, consortia between public bodies, universities and research institutions and colleges and professional bodies. Mapping activities were divided into three different levels of analysis based on: Exploring the institutional framework relevant for SI in each SEED Country; Identifying relevant public institutions, policies, projects and resources for the Competence Centers set up, main barriers and enablers for policymakers, beneficiaries, practitioners (for the promotion, testing, upscaling and mainstreaming of social innovation), a common framework to compare experiences, needs, challenges and opportunities; and Bringing out some key dimensions, elements to create the conditions for commitment in the Competence Centers development. The reference period of mapping activity was the EU Funds programming period 2014-2020 (Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini). Information contained: public institutions at all levels of government owners of project related to SI, main relevant ongoing/finished public projects/initiatives (top-down initiatives that could be used to promote, test, upscale and mainstream social innovation), main public funds and funding opportunities used at each level of

government (national, regional, and local level) and main related policy objectives, SDGs, themes and territorial area of interest. The second level of analysis was aiming to better identify the role of European Structural Funds, Cohesion Policy and national and regional funding opportunities, to identify main barriers and enablers for policymakers for the promotion, testing, upscaling and mainstreaming of social innovation, to build an ecosystem perspective and to select good practises characterised by elements of innovation (i.e., multi-funds, multi-governance approach) to be shared. Mapping resulted in a country descriptive report accompanied by a table of mapped top-down projects.

### 1.2.3 Implementation of the Mapping

The mapping process in Greece started with two basic principles: one was the intention to avoid yet another list of non-profit, for-profit and public entities that will be filled in a new official registry and eventually be outdated, and the other, was to make sure that what we know from experience as the existence of an informal sector of social innovation activities would not be omitted. For both bottom-up and top-down mapping the additional challenge was, on the one hand, delivering a template of a certain number of organisations up to a specific deadline for this project and, on the other hand, figuring out how to create a sustainable mapping process that could be useful beyond this deadline and become a resilient tool for the future Greek Competence Centre.

This last ambitious goal led the team to design a questionnaire to be sent to various registries of for-profit and non-profit organisations as well as the extended public sector, adding one more output to the task requirements. The questionnaire became a sub-project in itself. It had to include questions that would help us identify social innovation criteria, but it also included qualitative questions such as perceived barriers and went into details about informal collaborations, entries that would become useful in the next steps of the Competence Centre design. Two side-effects occurred, one negative and one positive: The negative was that many organisations never answered it, either due to lack of time or because they did not understand the scope and relevance of the research, but also because they could not acknowledge that what they were doing was related to SI. The positive outcome was that despite these difficulties, an incredibly useful tool was designed that, once refined after its first pilot trial, will allow continuing a mapping process of social innovation in Greece that has never been done before.

For the bottom-up mapping, this methodology delivery delayed some of the phases of the task, and in the end, not having collected enough organisations through this process, it was decided to hand-picked organisations from other available sources. The consortiums' partners own organisations' knowledge of the SI communities as well as the supporting organisations that have available data online feed the process and thus managed to submit 70 organisations within the deadline while continuing the exercise to reach 100 by the end of this report. The identification of supporting organisations is also an asset in the process, as this allows to expand the network with potential future stakeholders. For the top-down mapping, while the questionnaire was sent to local/regional authorities, universities, research institutes, some key ministries, and public organisations, extensive desk research also took place, where various financing programmes were reviewed, and case studies were spotted. Both activities led to 32 actions being mapped so far, but the activity is ongoing.

## ITALY

The bottom-up SI data collection was coordinated by the Polytechnic of Turin and it gathers 170 projects: about half of the initiatives (52%) are promoted by for-profit (or hybrid) organisations (Italy Country Report - task 1.1 Bottom-up SI data collection).

The top-down SI data collection was coordinated by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini and it gathers 211 projects promoted by 52 proponents referred to the Italian SEED sample. Local Public Administrations promoted the majority of the surveyed projects (> 80%) with cities promoting almost half of the total projects followed by regions. In the majority of the projects, the proponent carries out by itself the activities. Only in the approx. 40% of cases a partnership is built. ESF is the main funding source supporting almost half of the projects. Jointly with the other EU funds (ERDF, Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+), the European Commission supported almost ¾ of the projects (72%). National Funding plays a minor role (Italy Country Report - task 1.2 Analysis of the Institutional Context).

## ROMANIA

In bottom-up mapping, the focus was on three main pathways to collect data: community, associate partners' input, desk research. At fonduri-structurale.ro the organisation was involved in pioneering activities in promoting and supporting social innovation in Romania since 2014. It has been promoting funding opportunities on fonduri-structurale.ro since 2006 (a community of more than 120.000 registered members was built) and there have been acceleration programs for social entrepreneurs running since 2014. In the bottom-up mapping, you can see the main social innovations proposed by the partners of the project or by the entrepreneurs supported through accelerators/competitions in this field (i.e: Future Makers). Ashoka Romania indicated the best initiatives from their internal mappings. In the desk research quality publications that promote innovative actions (even though they do not identify these initiatives as "social innovations" – i.e: DOR – Decât o Revistă) have been consulted and thus valuable data about innovations outside our initial "bubble" was gathered.

In top-down mapping, the mapping is based on information in the media about innovative actions of public authorities/institutions given the fact that little to no information is available on public institutions' websites. In Romania, there is no financing line/call for proposals targeting social innovation, but in the Capacity Building Program financed under the ESF, there is the possibility to finance digital social innovations of the public authorities (even though they were not identified as social innovations). The list of projects financed under this program have been consulted (together with the Interregional ones) and the results of their implementation. The most relevant ones were included in the mapping – they reflect the solutions to current Romanian social issues. The amount of data gathered through these channels was very limited, an open call was organised for gathering suggestions from regular citizens from fonduri-structurale.ro's community. The received ideas were validated and only part of them was included in the final mapping. The main challenges in gathering data on social innovations in Romania were that social innovators don't identify themselves as such, the lack of complete value propositions stated on the online channels of the innovators (both private & public), and quite limited cooperation from public institutions.

## SLOVENIA

Mapping of social innovation initiatives in Slovenia was done by two separate entities. Bottom-up mapping was conducted by Center Noordung, a public institution under the Ministry of economic development and technology and Municipality of Vitanje, and the Ministry of Economic development and technology itself created the Top-down part of the mapping exercise.

Because of the work on the ASIS project, partners had a general idea of the actors in the field but did not have a list of all of the SI initiatives in the country. A questionnaire was created and included in the newsletter that was sent to the existing SI mailing list. The ecosystem actors have been asked to share the SI initiatives they know and would recommend. At the same time desk research was conducted by partners and the list of SI initiatives was created. It is a challenge to get the whole country involved in the mapping process. Getting to know the actors in the field is an ongoing process, but due to the COVID-19 crisis, only online events and conferences have been the source of new contacts, and there is much less networking being done in the virtual space. Nonetheless, over 30 bottom-up initiatives from different thematic areas have been gathered.

Top-down mapping was done by the Ministry of Economic development and technology. The Ministry is working on both horizontal and vertical levels, so the initiatives have been gathered from multiple sources.

Table 1.1 shows the number of projects identified in the bottom-up mapping exercise and the type of organisations that manage them, distinguishing between for-profit and not-for-profit entities. It also indicates the level of maturity of these social innovation initiatives.

Country	Number of Projects	Number of organisations		Level of maturity of innovation	
		For-profit	Not-for-profit	Established activities	Pilot projects
Italy	170	89	81	159	11
Slovenia	31	10	21	26	5
Romania	88	46	42	78	10
Greece	70	38	32	49	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>47</b>

Table 1.1 Number of projects identified in each country and organisations that manage them (Source: T1.1)

Table 1.2 displays the number of Supporting organisations identified in each country during the bottom-up mapping.

Country	Supporting organisations
Italy	41
Slovenia	7
Romania	11
Greece	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

Table 1.2 Number of supporting organisations in each country (Source: T1.1)

The below table shows the summary of results from the top-down mapping exercise by country. Detailed results are available in further chapters of this document, below you can see the number of projects collected, actors, funding, and type of initiative.

	ITALY	GREECE	ROMANIA	SLOVENIA
<b># PROJECTS</b>	211 projects by 52 actors	32 projects by 24 actors	28 projects by 22 actors	8 projects by 20 actors
<b>ACTORS</b>	Local Public Administrations (> 80%) Cities Regions	Local Authorities Universities	Urban municipalities Rural communes: Local Authorities; Regional Authorities; Central Authorities; Universities	Ministries Regional agencies Municipalities Universities
<b>FUNDING</b>	ESF Other EU funds (ERDF, H2020, Erasmus+) National Funds	H2020 ERDF funds	own resources ESF financing	ESF ERFD H2020 National funds
<b>TYPE OF INITIATIVES</b>	Integrating disadvantaged groups (37%); Innovation in welfare and social services (housing, territorial welfare); Education and training systems.	On-the-spot projects, ad hoc.	Strengthening public administration (11 out of 28 initiatives); Empowering people; Facilitating transitions; Building partnerships.	Integrating disadvantaged groups; Strengthening public administration; People empowerment; Building partnerships.

Table 1.3 – Summary of top-down mapping (Source: T1.2)

Below is the list of the main challenges faced by the partners while executing the mapping exercise:

- Short time frame of delivery (6 months)
- Responsiveness of actors
- Number of different tools and methods used to obtain data
- Lack of knowledge and awareness of SI (i.e. social innovators don't identify themselves as such)
- Lack of time and active participation from public institutions.

## 2 THEMATIC AREAS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

This section aims to give insights into nine different thematic areas addressed by the projects of social innovation. It summarises each country's material and highlights commonalities or differences among them. It cannot inform deeply and fully about all countries' thematic areas, so it is recommended to take into consideration the country reports in order to have clearer national pictures.

Besides discursive comments, each subsection contains

- Two introductory graphs (pie chart and histogram) about the number of mapped projects;
- A word cloud obtained by the societal and cultural discourse of each country;
- A summarising table of the objectives;
- A summarising table of the territorial contexts;
- A bubble diagram about the tools used by the innovative projects.

### 2.1 Circular economy and environment

The societal and cultural discourse about circular economy is widely connected with climate change and the environmental impact in all countries. There is a recent public and institutional attention on the topic, developed by European discourses about Just Transition and Sustainable Development Goals' Agenda, which Greece, Italy and Slovenia mentioned as drivers for their national turn. This current consideration is the reason why the word "public" has a medium-big size in the word cloud in figure 2.3. However, bottom-up and civil society initiatives are still the majority as figure 2.2 shows.

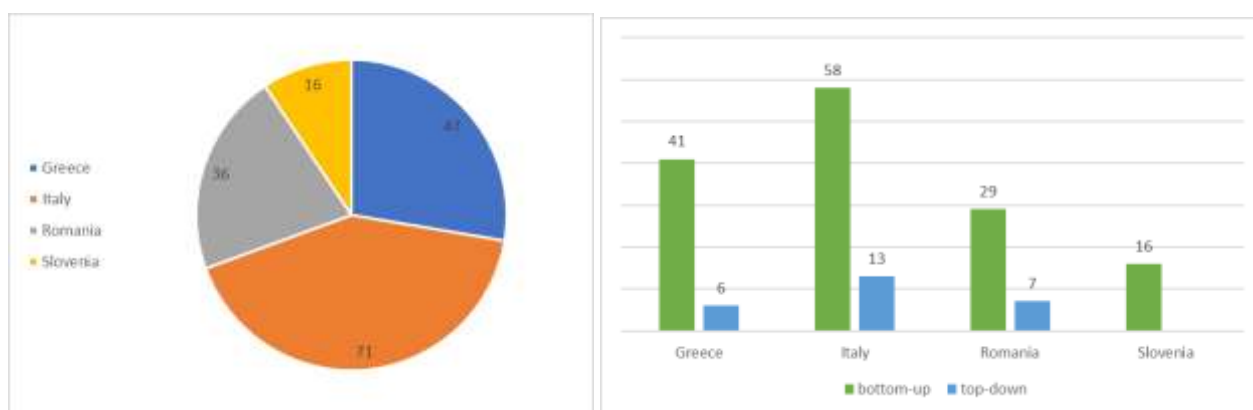


Figure 2.1 – Projects of social innovation in the area of Circular economy and environment

Figure 2.2 – Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area

The main and common objectives of the socially innovative mapped projects are reducing and recycling waste, on the one hand, and reducing carbon footprints and emissions, on the other hand. Moreover, Italian projects aim to reduce food waste and to develop agricultural sector technology, while Greek projects focus on rearranging refugee integration management and on finding temporary uses for abandoned spaces (tab. 2.1).





Figure 2.3 Word cloud of the “societal and cultural discourse” paragraphs of the country reports

As concerns the territorial contexts, the mapped projects are developed mainly in urban and rural environments, besides a few digital initiatives in Italy and Slovenia (tab. 2.2). Particularities are found in each country. In Greece, the projects in rural contexts concern mainly beaches or agricultural areas. The Romanian urban innovative projects involve local communities. Italy underlines the minimal presence of projects in internal areas of the country in the current mapping. On the contrary, the development of internal areas is gaining growing interest for both regional and national policies.

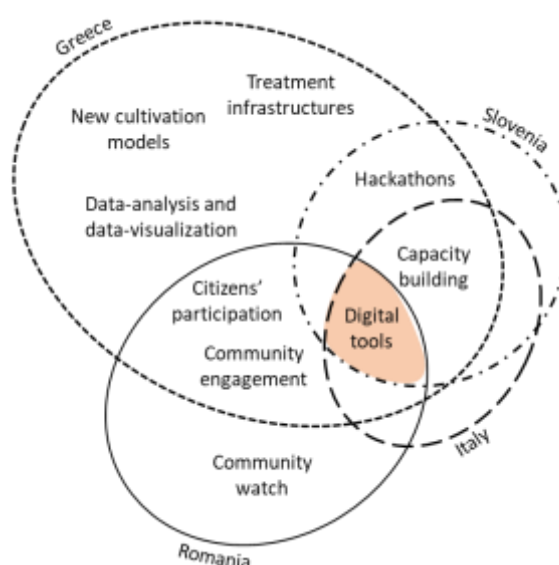
Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Reducing and recycling waste	X	X	X	X
Reducing food waste		X		
Reducing carbon footprints and emissions		X	X	X
Technological development of agriculture sector		X		
Re-arranging refugee integration management	X			
Temporary use of abandoned spaces	X			

Table 2.1 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Circular economy and environment

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece		X		
Italy	X	X		X
Romania	X			
Slovenia	X			X

Table 2.2 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Circular economy and environment

Figure 2.4 The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of circular economy and environment. The red area contains the tools shared by all countries



## 2.2 Digital transformation and smart cities

Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovenia describe a public discourse about digital transformations focused on public institutions' attempts to digitalise social services, health care, mobility, productive processes, energy production, etc. Greece reflects on the role of Covid-19 in forcing the public sector to make a frog's leap towards digital transformation, contributing to prioritising this change in all society's sectors. In the last two years, both Romania and Slovenia appointed a national officer to boost the digital transformation in their countries. Italy remarks its effort to create connectivity to provide services in real-time and allow administrations to be more efficient. The centrality of public actors in carrying their countries towards digitalisation is noticeable from figure 2.6, which shows a much more balanced presence of bottom-up and top-down projects compared to the previous thematic area.

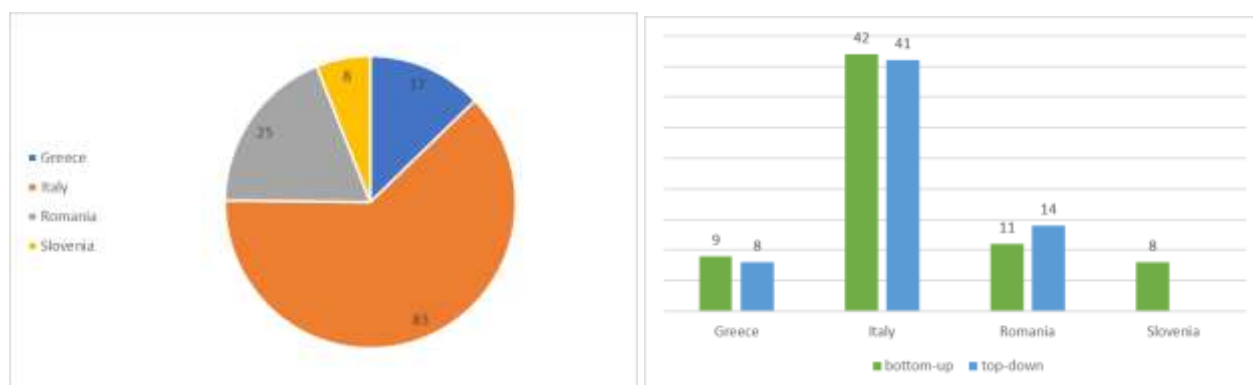


Figure 2.5 Projects of social innovation in the area of Digital transformation and smart cities

Figure 2.6 Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area.

As concerns Greece, however, bottom-up projects have opportunities to grow due to the social and territorial discrepancies (urban-rural) which are not addressed systematically by the public institutions (tab. 2.4). As concerns Italy, instead, the high number of bottom-up projects is determined by the strong role of private companies and start-ups in pushing processes' and products' digitalisation.

Also figure 2.7 displays the centrality and role of public institutions within this area, thanks to words such as "minister", "public", "government", "national", "plan".



Figure 2.7 Word cloud of the "societal and cultural discourse" paragraphs of the country reports



Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Digitalising health	x	x		
Digitalising education, culture and preservation of cultural heritage, environmental protection, urban regeneration	x			
Digitalising public services and social rights protection	x		x	
Accessibility	x			x
Eco-solutions for smart cities			x	
Diffusion of digital competences				x

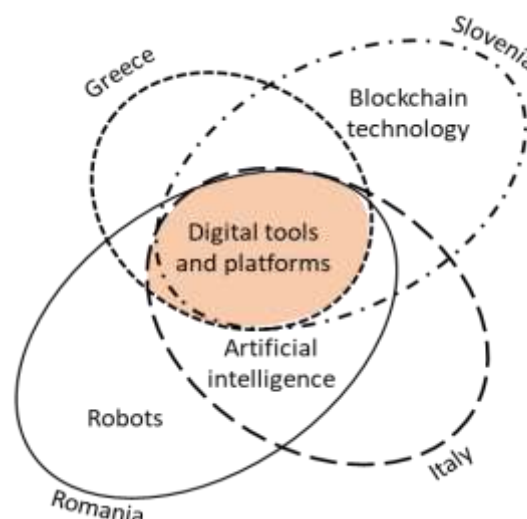
Table 2.3 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Digital transformations and smart cities

Apart from Greece which has more variety of objectives among its projects, the other countries' projects are mainly focused on one objective (tab. 2.3): Italian projects aim at digitising health, Romanian projects address digitalising public services and social rights protection and Slovenian projects intend to diffuse digital competences. We remind the reader that the mapped projects do not cover the whole set of existing innovative projects in each country, so it is acceptable to imagine that these objectives are only a minimal part of the ones really achievable.

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	x	x	x	x
Italy	x			x
Romania	x			x
Slovenia	x			x

Table 2.4 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Digital transformations and smart cities

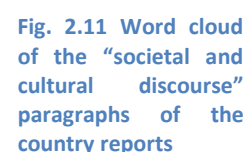
Figure 2.8 The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Digital transformations and smart cities. The red area contains the tools shared by all countries



## 2.3 Health

Even if the Health sector is recognized as one of the most relevant issues in the national public discourses, all countries' partners acknowledge the difficulties in innovating and improving the health policies and services. In Greece, the recent pandemic has intensified the weaknesses of the system and the need for more intense and well-organised proximity services as well as primary health care has been observed. In Italy, it has favoured a growing awareness of the need for a patient-centred health system. Romania is suffering the "brain drain" of young doctors who are moving abroad for better working conditions.

The cultural and societal discourse about social innovation in the health sector turns around concepts such as science, research, and medicine (fig. 2.11).



**Tab. 2.5 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Health**

The territorial contexts where social innovations develop are mainly urban. Moreover, Greece and Italy mapped projects which are located in the digital dimension (tab. 2.6).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	X	X	X	X
Italy	X			X
Romania	X			X
Slovenia	X			X

Tab. 2.6 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Health

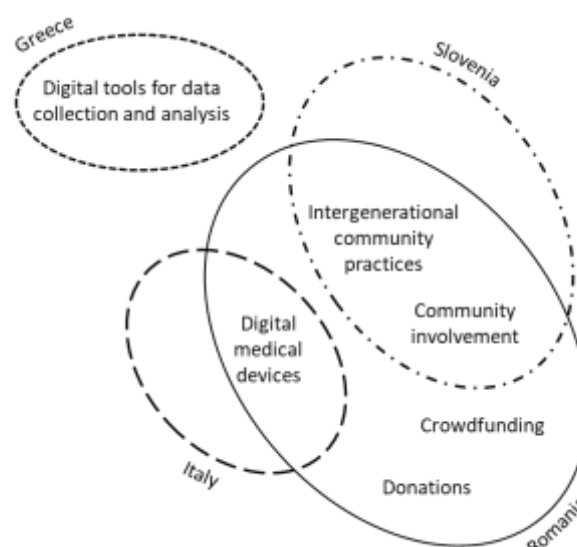


Fig. 2.12 The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Health

## 2.4 Education

The educational system is narrated as quite worrying by the partners of Greece, Italy, and Romania. In all these countries the public discourse revolves around the school system's difficulties of renovating itself, relating both to infrastructure and to curricula. Italian partners underline in particular the inadequate digital equipment of schools. Indeed, figure 2.15 highlights the attention given to digital and technological aspects of education, not only in Italy but in Slovenia too. In Slovenia, in 2021 a network of public-private partners implemented a new initiative with the aim of supporting youth in entrepreneurial paths and in the job search. Greek, Italian and Romanian media cover as well as the problem of access to education for marginalised groups, such as Roma, immigrants, and disabled youth.

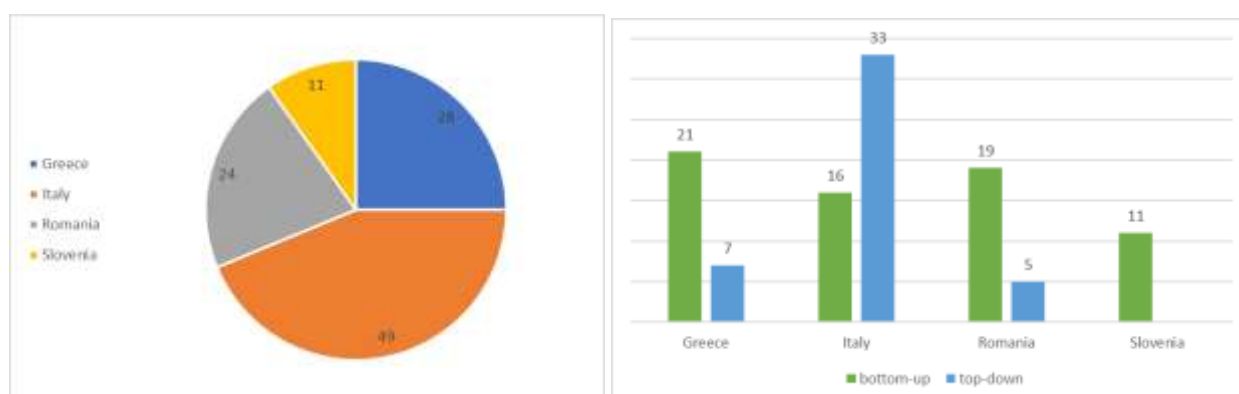
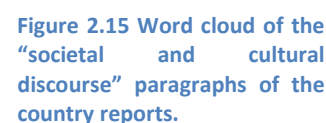


Figure 2.13 Projects of social innovation in the area of Education.

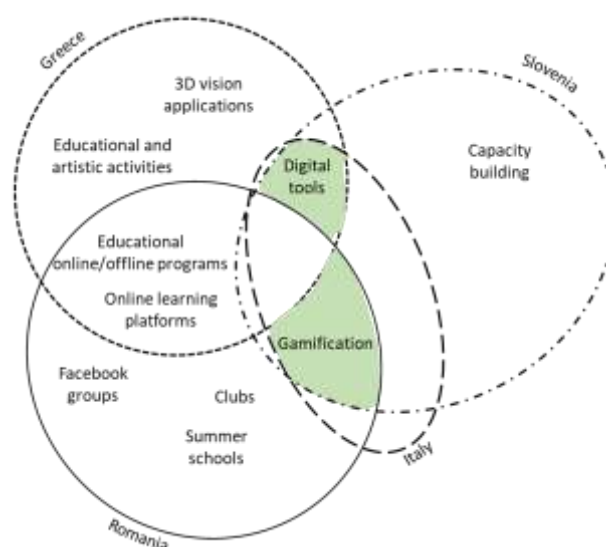
Figure 2.14 Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area.

The issue of access to education is reflected in the objectives of social innovation projects in Greece, Italy and Romania. Italian projects focus also on improving the intergenerational relationships between youth and elderly, and the education of civic activation and civic engagement (tab. 2.7).

Table 2.7 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Education

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	x			
Italy	x			x
Romania	x			
Slovenia	x			x

Figure 2.16 The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Education. The green areas contain the tools shared by three countries



## 2.5 Cultural heritage and creative industries

In all European countries, the pandemic uncovered the immense contribution of culture and creativity to citizens' well-being, social innovation, economic growth, and international cooperation. However, the reactions and consequent behaviour of public institutions are diverse country by country. For instance, Slovenian policymakers and businesses increasingly recognized cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) as the key players in the construction of the “new normal”. In Greece, instead, the importance of cultural heritage as a collective identity and as a key force in tourism and other economic sectors is not reflected either in policies or in other facilitation mechanisms for cultural and creative industries.

Apart from Italy where bottom-up and top-down mapped projects are balanced, all other countries are characterised by a strong majority of bottom-up projects (fig. 2.18).

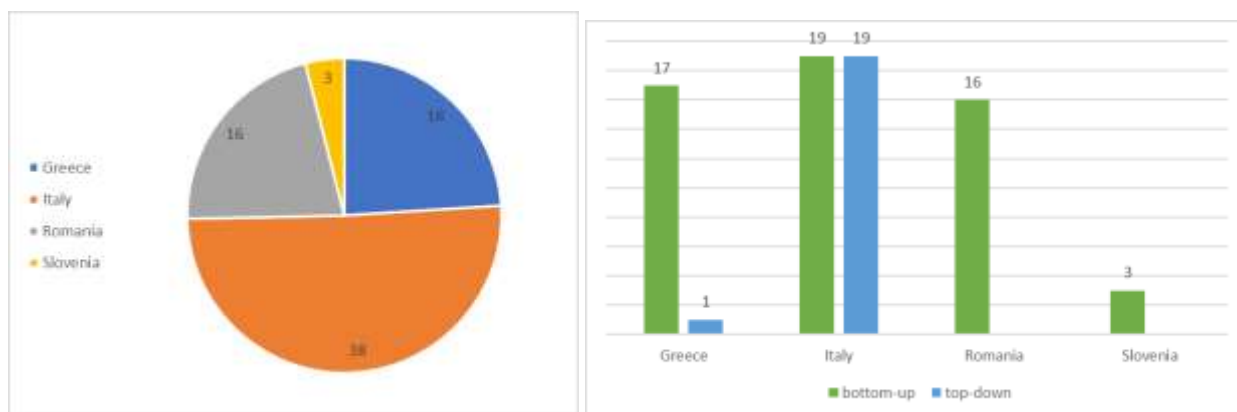


Figure 2.17 Projects of social innovation in the area of Cultural heritage and creative industries

Figure 2.18 Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area



Figure 2.19 Word cloud of the “societal and cultural discourse” paragraphs of the country reports

Within this thematic area, an important role is played by artistic activities and performances, used as a tool to reach more inclusion and participation (tab. 2.9 and fig. 2.20). The other two relevant objectives of social innovation projects are promoting existing cultural sites (Italy and Romania) and renovating old buildings into cultural and creative hubs (Italy, Romania, and Slovenia) (tab. 2.9).



Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Using art or artistic activities to relieve, help, and support social issues	x	x		
Promoting intercultural exchange and active participation of migrants and refugees		x		
Developing digital platforms to increase the awareness of and access to cultural heritage		x		
Supporting craftsmanship			x	
Promoting existing cultural sites		x	x	
Renovating and rebuilding old buildings into cultural and creative hubs		x	x	x

Table 2.9 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Cultural heritage and creative industries

More than other innovation areas, the thematic area of cultural heritage and creative industries includes projects with both urban and rural expansion (tab. 2.10).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	x	x		
Italy	x			x
Romania		x		
Slovenia	x	x		

Table 2.10 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Cultural heritage and creative industries



Figure 2.20 – The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Cultural heritage and creative industries. The green area contains the tools shared by three countries

## 2.6 Poverty

The recent economic crises and the Covid-19 pandemic have imposed poverty at the highest level of discourse, both political and public. All the countries involved in SEED projects are experiencing negative impacts in terms of wealth distribution, access to employment and, in general, social and economic well-being. However, another commonality they share is the inadequate policies developed by public institutions to address these issues. The lack of national policies and funds to fight poverty is noticeable in figure 2.22 which reports the numbers of top-down and bottom-up projects. All countries present a majority of bottom-up projects, apart from Italy. However, this difference is given by the active role of municipalities and regions to implement at least local policies (fig. 2.22).



covid measures risk european poorest account highest teen population vintage

**countries** government anti policy rising education special low school

support now living according crisis factors conditions most consistent children while

**poverty** beginning if concentration media housing starting place experiencing income

solved public bottom your made systemic solution cost matter put periods improvement discourse food leader

elderly prices happening malnutrition high take actually discussions geographical issues salaries programs missing

**people** perceivable situation into rate operational follow national impact topic neglect addressed official statistics

eu proposed ngos senior tackle financial been site challenges sector order found up

political implementation connected soc

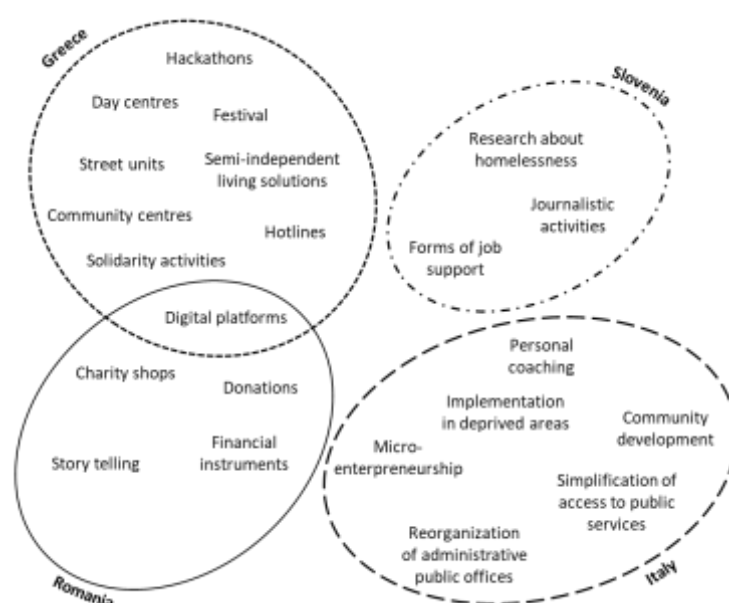
Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Fulfilling basic needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (food, hygiene, housing)	x	x	x	x
Empowering beneficiaries	x	x		
Delivering public policies which grant more equal access to public services		x		

All social innovation projects have an urban and rural expansion (tab 2.12), while they adopt quite different tools to achieve their aims (fig. 2.24).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	X	X		
Italy	X	X		
Romania	X	X		
Slovenia	X			

Table 2.12 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Poverty

Figure 2.24 The tools used by projects addressing the issue of Poverty



## 2.7 Migration

Migration is a big issue in Greece and Italy. Despite the serious refugee wave six years ago, Greece is still lacking strategic policies, while the third sector is very active, backed up by many donors and focusing especially on inclusion and integration (fig. 2.26). In Italy, the discourses about migration are often instrumentally constructed by politicians and media which benefit from it, feeding on the fears of citizens, while providing simple and static answers to complex issues. On the contrary, migration has not high priority in the Romanian public discourse as the country is not on a major migration route and not a usual destination for migrants. Two issues are at stake in Romania: emigration, which the political sector is addressing by creating opportunities for the return of Romanian people; human trafficking (fig. 2.27), which is a highly profitable business and increasing due to poverty, corruption, social inequality, uneven territorial development.

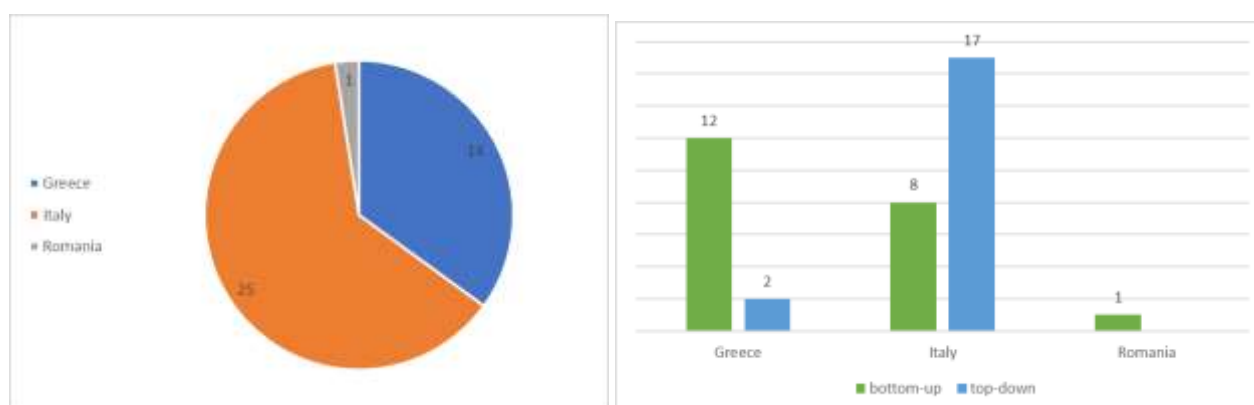


Figure 2.25 Projects of social innovation in the area of Migration

Figure 2.26 Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area



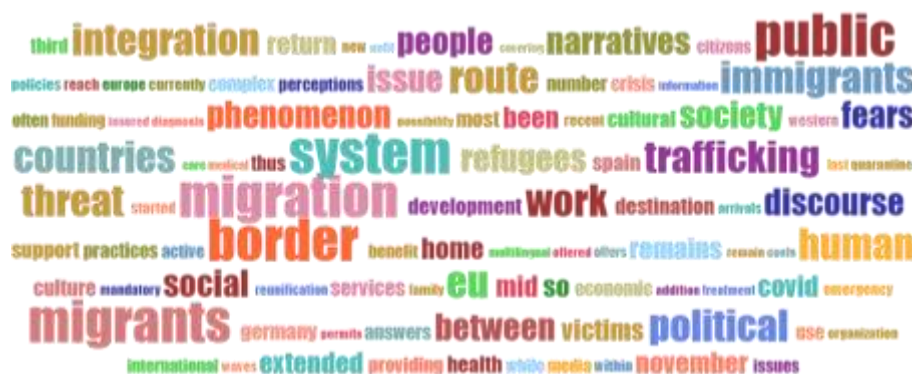


Figure 2.27 Word cloud of the “societal and cultural discourse” paragraphs of the country reports

Even if Slovenia did not map any social innovation projects within this thematic area, it is worth

noticing that public institutions reacted to the COVID-19 crisis by providing multilingual information and medical care to immigrants and by covering all costs of diagnosis and treatment, even for those who were not insured in the public health system.

Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania
Fulfilling basic needs of migrants (food, hygiene, housing, language)	x		
Fostering the creation of a shared sense of belonging between migrant and local populations	x	x	
Enhancing processes of empowerment		x	
Producing less stereotyped narratives of migration and counteracting forms of hatred and intolerance		x	
Preventing and helping the victims of human trafficking			x

Table 2.13 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Migration

Besides specific national objectives, Greek and Italian projects share the intention to foster the creation of a common sense of belonging between migrant and local populations (tab. 2.13).

Italian projects also have the specificities to develop in inner areas, since the Italian reception system is spread also in small villages, mountains or peripheral areas (tab 2.14).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	x			
Italy	x	x	x	
Romania	x			

**Table 2.14 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Migration.**

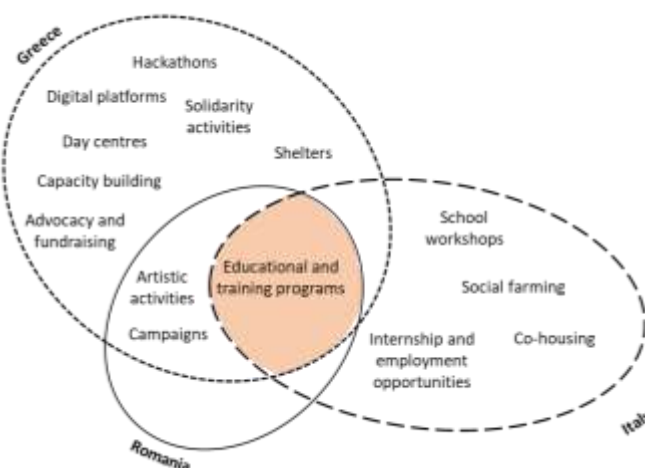


Figure 2.28 The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Migration. The red area contains the tools shared by all countries having social innovation projects within this thematic area

As in the previous thematic area, Greece and Italy share commonalities about their public discourse on urban regeneration. Bottom-up and top-down actions address the redesign of cities, to enhance the proximity among inhabitants and communities, the management of public space as commons, and the social-environmental-economic sustainability. In Romania, urban regeneration is not very central on the public agenda. The main issues covered by the public discourse target the improvement of the energy efficiency of the urban buildings and earthquake consolidations. Finally, the biggest challenges in Slovenia are urban sprawl, mobility, degraded or underused inner urban areas, and energy efficiency.

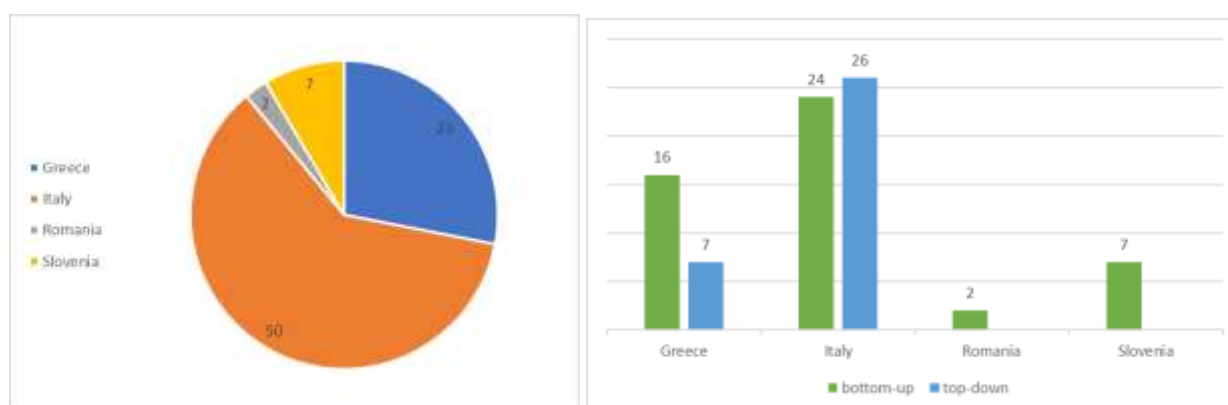


Figure 2.30 Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area



**Figure 2.31 Word cloud of the “societal and cultural discourse” paragraphs of the country reports**

Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Fostering social cohesion and social inclusion by regeneration of areas (place-making)	x	x		
Spreading knowledge and raising awareness on the importance of urban regeneration actions			x	
Renewing existing developed areas and brownfields				x

Table 2.15 The objectives of social innovations within the thematic area of Urban regeneration

Most social innovation projects develop in urban territorial context, such as the numerous green initiatives undertaken in Ljubljana to regenerate the city, mitigate climate change and preserve ecosystems. A minor part of projects is realised in rural areas, such as Greek villages that are suffering from the results of internal migration, but also from the uneven waves of tourists every summer (tab. 2.16).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
Greece	X	X		
Italy	X	X		
Romania	X			
Slovenia	X	X		

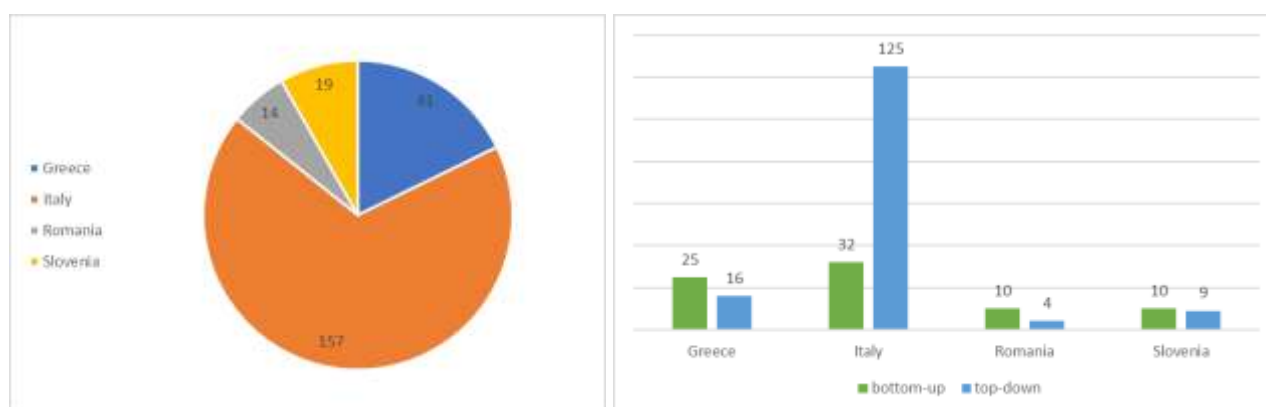
**Table 2.16** The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Urban regeneration

**Figure 2.32** The tools used by projects addressing the issue of Urban regeneration



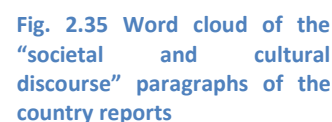
## 2.9 Welfare and work

Within the area of welfare, SEED partners report that the main focus of their public discourses concerns working and employment policies. In the four countries, the political agenda is trying to foster the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as NEET and the elderly in Greece, youth and disabled people in Italy, disadvantaged workers in Romania and women in Slovenia. The roles of top-down and bottom-up actors are equally important in all countries. The Italian mapping recorded a high number of top-down projects because the public institutions, especially those at regional and national scale, play a role by contributing to innovate governance, processes and partnerships at the local scale: indeed, they present themselves as facilitators of connections among stakeholders and supervisors of their work.



**Fig. 2.33** Projects of social innovation in the area of Welfare and work

**Fig. 2.34** Comparison between bottom-up and top-down mapped projects within the thematic area



Objectives	Greece	Italy	Romania	Slovenia
Developing innovative skills and ways to improve services in all social sectors	x			x
Supporting the creation of new social enterprises	x			x
Citizens' empowerment and involvement		x		x
Creating new working possibilities and fostering work inclusion of disadvantaged workers		x	x	x
Fostering social responsibility		x		x
Developing approaches of social impact evaluation		x		

Social initiatives concerning welfare and work are developed throughout the countries, in both urban and rural areas in the case of Greece and Slovenia. However, the mapped projects depict a common trend in Italy and Greece: the increasing number of innovative projects in unusual areas of innovation (central and southern cities in the case of Italy; northern regions and less touristic cities in the case of Greece).

	Urban	Rural	Mountain	Digital
<b>Greece</b>	X	X		
<b>Italy</b>	X			
<b>Romania</b>	X			
<b>Slovenia</b>	X	X		X

Tab. 2.18 The territorial contexts of social innovations within the thematic area of Welfare and work.

Fig. 2.36. The tools used by the projects addressing the issue of Welfare and work. The green area contains the tools shared by three countries



## 3 STAKEHOLDERS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

### 3.1 Citizens

Citizens movements and citizens initiatives are most prominent in Greece, even though also in Slovenia and Italy they play a consistent role. Because they are networks made of weak and low-intensity ties and membership forms are impalpable or non-existent, they are more difficult to map. Nevertheless, more than 30% of the projects mapped for Greece mention the involvement of citizens or citizen movements. Most of the Greek citizen movements were created during the years of crisis as an immediate response to the needs of society, and they operate at a very grass root level. They usually have a neighbourhood spread, their actions are often short in duration and magnitude, and they operate strictly voluntarily. Well known actions are the distribution of cooked meals, assistance to the homeless, distribution of clothes and other materials to the ones in need. Other actions also include time banks, communal hospitals, and urban vegetable gardens.

Citizen movements in Slovenia are active mostly in the field of climate change and environment, but also in the housing sector and women's rights. Italy has many active citizenship initiatives - it can be mentioned the national association of brain-damaged children which gathers all the local claims and issues experienced by families and the protest movement of riders, which was born in a few big cities where the delivery companies were working more and which now includes all riders of the Italian territory. Citizen movements in Romania are weaker than in the other three countries, but it can be noticed that communities respond to charismatic leaders or social innovators and support social innovation causes through crowdfunding, for example.

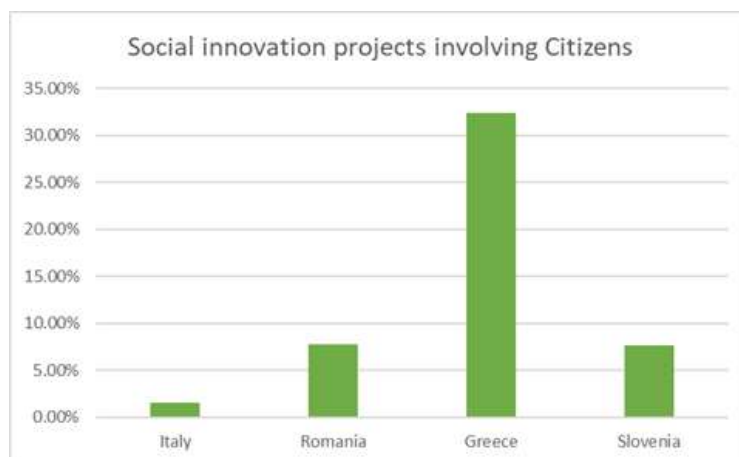


Figure 3.1



## 3.2 Social economy actors

### 3.2.1 Associations

Associations and NGOs are one of the most important stakeholders in promoting social innovation in all four countries. In Greece for example, associations used to be the most developed part of the 3rd sector for decades, with many local initiatives all around the country mainly in the cultural, regeneration and environmental sectors and activities. The urbanisation of the previous decades created a large number of associations linked to the cultural heritage of citizens who moved to the cities. In Greece there are many NGOs, the majority being very small with a local scope, and a few larger ones with national coverage. They are active in a variety of fields: children, health, migrants, environment, youth, etc. The more organised, have surpassed the critical mass for survival and have the proper administrative structure, have access to finance and are operating satisfactorily. They also have a good reputation and acceptance by society. Their visibility is high and their role in social innovation is also high also due to their access to private and public funding. It is not surprising that more than 60% of the mapped initiatives in Greece involve associations. At the same time, associations are also one of the most important drivers for social innovation in Romania (almost 30% of the mapped projects). The “third sector” has been developing substantially starting in the ‘90s and has been constantly developing innovative measures for fulfilling their missions. They are involved in the design of new social innovations, but also in their production and funding them through diverse fundraising strategies. Some of the most important associations not only deliver social innovations, but also contribute to multiplying their effects by supporting/mentoring new social innovators. In Slovenia, more than 40% of the mapped projects involve associations.

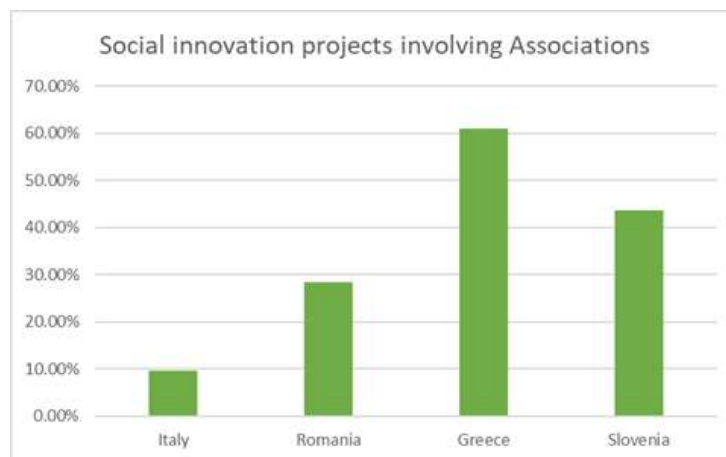


Figure 3.2

### 3.2.2 Cooperatives

The cooperative model faces a lot of similarities between three of the analysed countries: with roots in agricultural cooperatives in Greece, Slovenia and Romania, the cooperative model in the 3 countries is changing. The cooperative model in the three countries is moving from the (poorly seen) agricultural cooperative that did not provide value for social innovation to new forms of cooperation, especially in Greece. In Greece different ministries hold different registries with cooperatives. One of the most valuable registries for social innovation is the registry held by the

Department for Social and Solidarity Economy at the Ministry of Labour. This registry, provided by the Law 4430/2016 on Social and Solidarity Economy and its entities, reports some 2097 entities (as of November 30, 2021) of which 1773 were the active ones. More specifically, there were 1565 active social economy enterprises (KoiNSEp) of collective and social benefit, 50 KoinSEp of social inclusion and an additional 29 social cooperatives with limited liability (KoiSPE) which aim specifically on social inclusion of people with mental health problems. Thus, although the concept of social cooperatives (KoiNSEp) is rather new (as a legal form was only introduced in 2011 with law 4019/11) their numbers increase, especially after the introduction of the current law in 2016. Another promising field of cooperative activity is to be found in the energy sector. The relevant law of 2018 introduced the coop legal form of energy communities, with the competent ministry being the one on Energy and Environment and spurred the development of cooperative ventures in renewable energy production, energy-saving and fair transition. This type of coops shows an interesting dynamic as depicted in their pace of development: while in August 2020 there were some 409 energy communities, in a bit more than one year, according to the Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving, this number has more than doubled and in October 2021 there are some 1,107 energy communities active in Greece. Similar to Greece, Italy also has a large number of active social cooperatives –16.125. Italy has a long tradition and outstanding expertise in the field of cooperation and volunteering, which was born in the 70s with the first organisations of social cooperatives. Moreover, during the last fifteen years, many new organisation forms are mushrooming. This development brought to rethink the traditional borders between for-profit and not for profit organisations, generating more and more hybridization. In Italy there are present two specific forms of cooperatives, specifying the type of activities they manage:

- Social cooperatives that manage various kinds of activities aimed at the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens through a) the management of social, health and educational services (type A); the carrying out of various activities - agricultural, industrial, commercial or services - aimed at the employment of disadvantaged people (type B).
- Community cooperatives (a very new form of cooperation) that produce goods and/or services in a stable and continuous manner, including goods of public interest. They have a “cooperative” feature because they are managed by the members on the basis of inclusive and democratic principles. In addition, they are characterised by strong roots within their own community with the aim of improving their living conditions and responding to the needs of the subjects that compose the community.

If in Greece we have a national registry on social economy organizations held by the Department for Social and Solidarity Economy at the Ministry of Labour, Italy has the Single National Register of the Third Sector (RUNTS) which is the telematic register set up at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in implementation of Articles 45 et seq. of the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree No. 117 of 3 July 2017), to ensure the full transparency of Third Sector entities (ETS) through the publicity of the information items registered therein. In contrast to Greece, this is a comprehensive registry of all the third sector.

Cooperatives are a fast-moving and fast-developing force in Slovenia. The most successful cooperative in Slovenia is the Cooperative ‘Stara Roba, nova raba’ also a social enterprise whose basic purpose is employment, training, inclusion and support for people with experience of homelessness and other socially vulnerable people. In Romania, there are less active socially



innovative cooperatives, but we could find an example of a successful energy cooperative, similar to Greece.

It is understandable why in the mapping of cooperatives of social innovations we encountered them mostly in the Italian, Greek and Slovenian ecosystems, and less in the Romanian one.

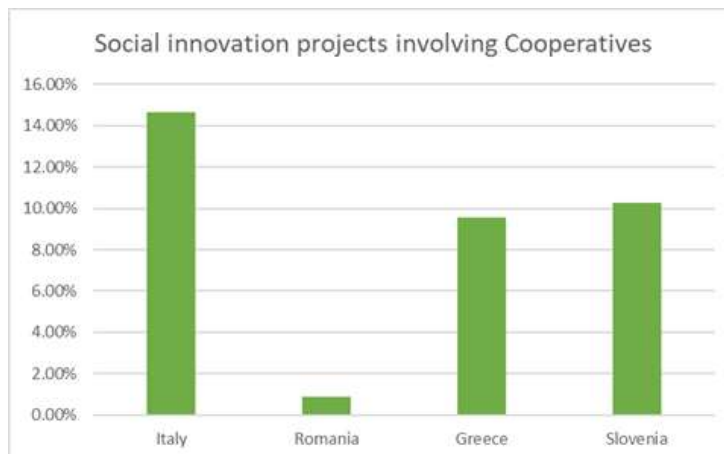


Figure 3.3

### 3.2.3 Social enterprises

The role of social enterprises seems to be most robust in Romania out of the four analysed countries (19% of the mapped projects in Romania involve these stakeholders, 15% in Slovenia, 11% in Greece and 4% in Italy). First supported through ESF funding under the 2007 – 2013 financial period, social entrepreneurship has started to grow more robust in Romania given the different acceleration processes supported by the European programs. The first social enterprises supported in Romania were work integration social enterprises (WISEs) and, therefore, this social entrepreneurship vertical is prominent. Nevertheless, in the past 3 years social entrepreneurs started to target other social issues as well (especially in the environment sector). This is why in Romania we currently have 2440 registered social enterprises (1.841 being awarded this title in 2021).

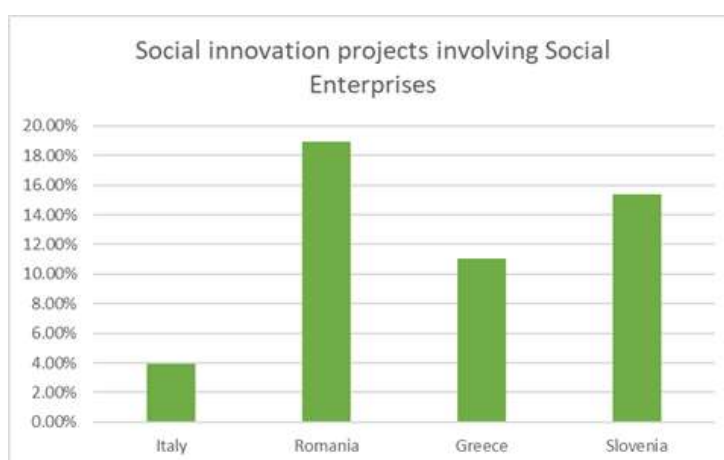


Figure 3.4

By comparison, Italy currently reports 1.874 social enterprises, while Slovenia 269. In Greece, there is not a specific legal form dedicated to “social enterprises” (there is not a single reference to any Greek Law on “social enterprise”), but despite the fact that their business model is not widely recognised, due to a lack of awareness, visibility and understanding, their role and potential as Social Innovation actors is quite high. An interesting approach is the “SIAS” (Innovative start-ups with a social vocation) in Italy (173 such startups reported). SIAS are innovative start-ups but operate in specific sectors recognized as having particular social value, such as social care; health care; education, training, education; protection of the environment and the ecosystem; enhancement of cultural heritage; social tourism; university and post-university training; research and provision of cultural services. Because of this specificity, they oscillate between non-profit and profit and usually have a low return on investment.

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### 3.2.4 Foundations

The mapping has shown that the role of foundations in supporting social innovation is prominent in Greece out of the four countries (25% of the mapped projects), being followed by Italy (11%) and Romania (8%). There are several Foundations in Greece that finance social innovation and social actions in general. They are very active in financing innovative actions and collaborating mainly with NGOs but also some Social Enterprises. Some of these foundations take initiatives for the enhancement of the ecosystem, financing incubators or providing training to actors. Their visibility is very high and their interest in social innovation is also high. In Romania, there are only a handful of visible foundations that invest in social innovators. One of the most prominent one (Close to you Foundation) invests resources in the social innovation ecosystem using its own experience in developing such initiatives. No visible role is given to foundations in the Slovenian SI ecosystem.

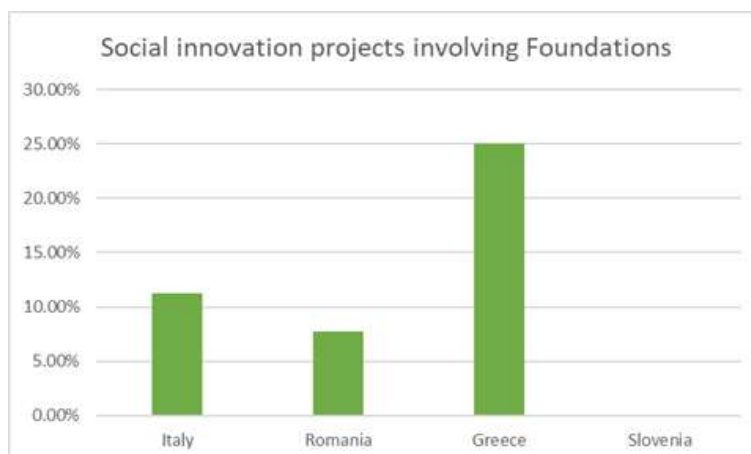


Figure 3.5

### 3.3 Private companies and incubators/accelerators

#### 3.3.1 Private companies

Private companies have an important role in the Social Innovation ecosystems of the four analysed countries, particularly in Italy. In Italy, companies that were identified as the most representative for social innovation are B-Corps and other private companies that place a strong emphasis on social responsibility. Italy represents an interesting “laboratory” for sustainable, responsible and transparent business models. This is confirmed by the establishment of the legal status of 'Benefit Company', after its launch in the United States. At present, the B Corp certification, awarded to companies that achieve the highest standards of environmental and social performance and adopt the legal status of a Benefit Corporation, is an interesting example of a sustainable company. B Corporations measure the value they create for people and the planet and they extend to stakeholders the considerations generally reserved for shareholders. This model makes it possible for companies to include in their statutes the aims of Common Benefit that they undertake to pursue, additionally to profit, thus differentiating themselves from traditional "non-benefit" companies whose sole purpose is to generate profits for shareholders. There are 123 B Corporations in Italy and they employ 14,146 people. Worldwide, there are 4,000 companies promoted by the non-profit organisation B Lab, which verifies and ensures that a company operates according to high standards of social and environmental performance.

In Greece and Romania, the Corporate Social Responsibility programmes of Private Companies are usually supporting social economy entities and in that course are often financing Social Innovation. NGOs and Social Enterprises usually collaborate with CSR programmes and are in many cases the initiators of these programmes and projects. This is a rather new situation since most of the CSR programmes were under budgeted for years, while recently the Corporate Agenda and the SDGs have made several corporations take a more structured approach that facilitates this cooperation. There are also some new small private companies – start-ups – that have social innovation embedded in their business model, being at the same time for-profit companies, i.e. working on environmental protection, circular economy or digitalisation etc.

In Slovenia, SMEs are looking for socially innovative solutions that deal with a very specific challenge that is also their core business.

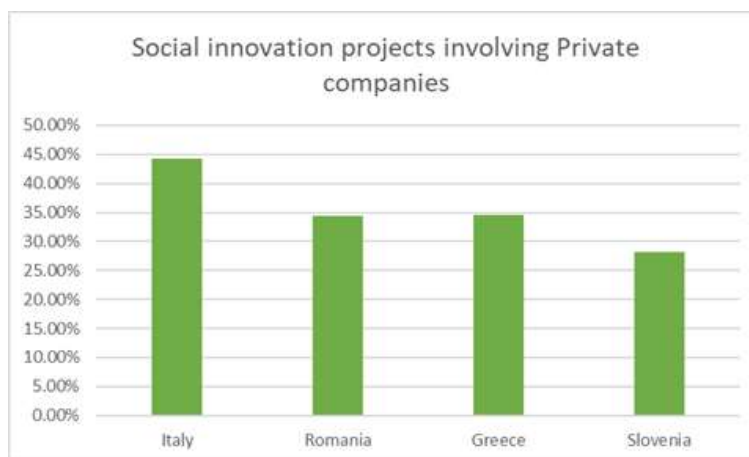


Figure 3.6

### 3.3.2 Incubators/accelerators

Starting in 2019, more and more acceleration programs appeared on the Romanian market for social entrepreneurs – backed by ESF money. It is unclear if the multiple acceleration programs financed under the ESF in Romania in the past years (more than 180 accelerators) will continue to run after the European grants are over. There are also other acceleration programs (privately financed) specific for social innovators (Consolid8, Synerb Venture Catalyzer, Social Innovation Solutions) that regularly open acceleration cohorts. There are no incubators targeting specifically social innovators active in Romania. The situation is slightly different in Greece where there are a few incubators, but fewer accelerators. In Slovenia, there is a very well-developed business incubator and accelerator ecosystem. There are around 25 entities that offer support to businesses. Similar to Romania, there is a lot of public financing going into these support programs: most Slovenian incubators are financed by the Ministry of economic development and technology. There are also university incubators, incubators financed by regional development agencies and a few private incubators.

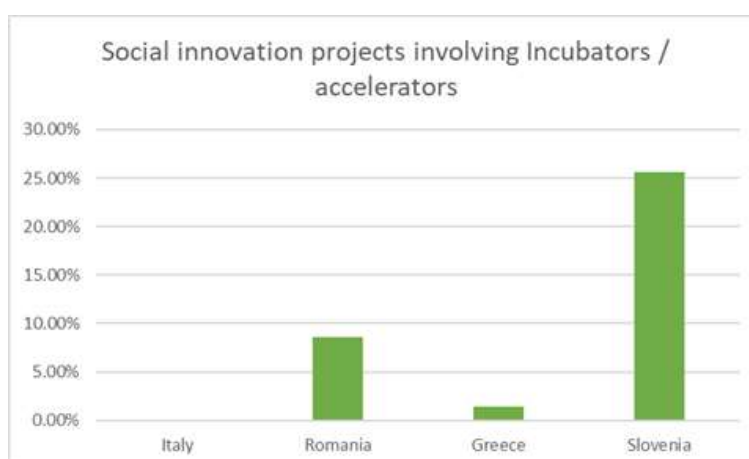


Figure 3.7

### 3.4 Universities / Research Institutes

Italian universities and research institutes have been traditionally recognised as very active in research on social innovation in Europe. More recently, the concept of social innovation has been integrated in research areas ranging from bio-economy to digital technologies (often related to smart cities studies), to cultural heritage and creative industry, management studies and social sciences and humanities in general. The number of Italian universities active in these areas is growing and, in this respect, the projects mapped under-represent this coverage.

Greek universities and research institutes have slowly incorporated Social Innovation in their educational and research portfolios. There are courses on Social Innovation in some of the Social Sciences and there is one master course on social innovation, inaugurated recently. The Social and Solidarity Economy Master's degree of the Open University, operating for 4 years now, has been of great assistance both in recognising the ecosystem and increasing knowledge of the concept. Research institutes also have some projects on Social Innovation funded by various EU instruments.

Similarly, universities in Romania and Slovenia have started to develop graduate programs for students in the field of social innovation (2 Romanian universities, 5 Slovenian universities). Some Romanian universities have also been involved directly in creating and delivering social innovations (especially in the climate/environment sectors) and in Slovenia, some universities also have knowledge transfer offices that contribute to sector connectivity, youth employment and youth engagement in systems change. Some Romanian universities have developed acceleration programs (financed under the ESF) for social entrepreneurs. The Slovenian universities and research institutes seem to be more involved in supporting social innovation, than actually being part of SI initiatives – this is why the mapping is lacking Slovenian examples of universities involved in SI projects.

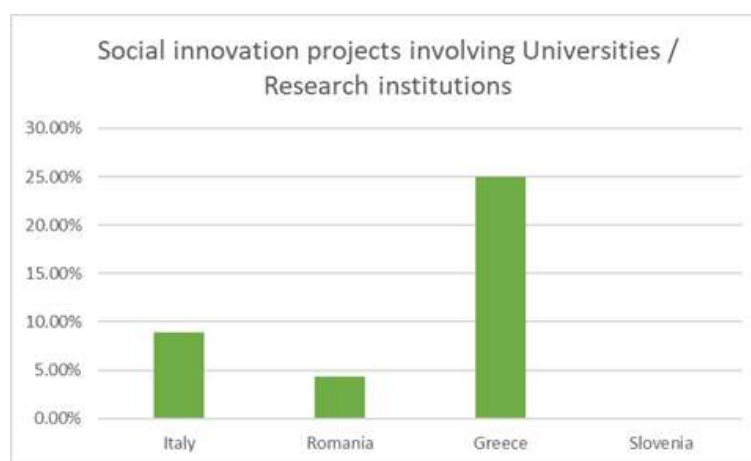


Figure 3.8

### 3.5 Public institutions

#### 3.5.1 Local public institutions and agencies

Local public institutions play a very important role in the social innovation ecosystems in the four countries. In Romania, they have developed over the past years some initiatives in the digital areas that target improving their collaborations with the citizens they represent. They are mostly using European funding to carry out their activities, but there are also other notable initiatives funded by their own resources. In Greece, many municipalities participate, even finance, projects of social innovation together with other actors. In general, few are aware of the concept and have a deep understanding of it, however, most of them are willing to participate if the action is financed externally.

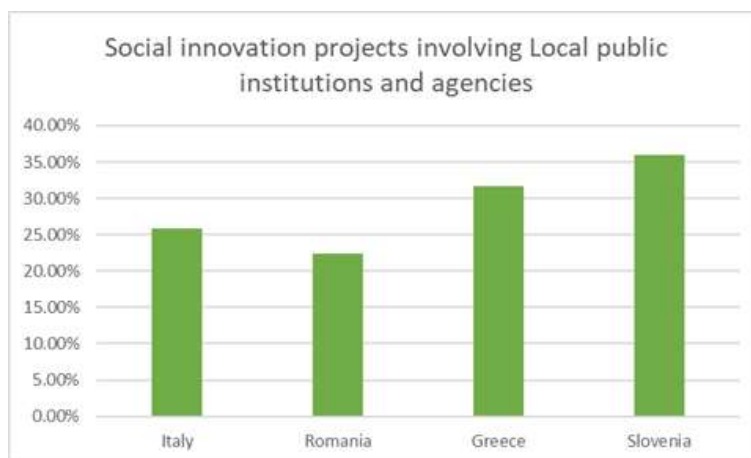


Figure 3.9

The visibility and their role in local social innovation actions are high, but their operation is sporadic, and they do not have a strategy or an action plan in place. In Italy, their role is even more substantial. Italian urban municipalities carry out many experiments regarding both process and product innovations. About processes, despite being still characterised by slow internal bureaucratic procedures, municipalities are changing their granting role towards civil society into a facilitating role. Playing this role, municipalities open the arena of decision-making to many other stakeholders, accepting to share the responsibility for the common interest.

#### 3.5.2 Regional public institutions and agencies

Italy and Slovenia are the two countries where regional public institutions and agencies play an important role in the social innovation ecosystem, driven mostly by European funding. In Slovenia, the regional authorities already are providing guidance and opportunities to municipalities and local actors. A new call for proposals published by the Slovenian Ministry of the economy will empower them to become the main actors and facilitators in creating the SE ecosystem. At the Italian regional level, we acknowledge a growing interest of Italian regions to favour the development of stakeholders' local networks for social innovation. This interest is also influenced by the Next Generation EU Funding. In contrast to these two countries, the Greek regional authorities do not have an understanding of the Social Innovation concept and there is no prioritisation of it in their agendas. They are managing EU funds and thus they may design a



programme that includes social innovation, but this is very limited. They very rarely participate in social innovation actions. Their visibility as SI actors is low but their impact is important due to the management of funding. In Romania, there are no formal regional public authorities.

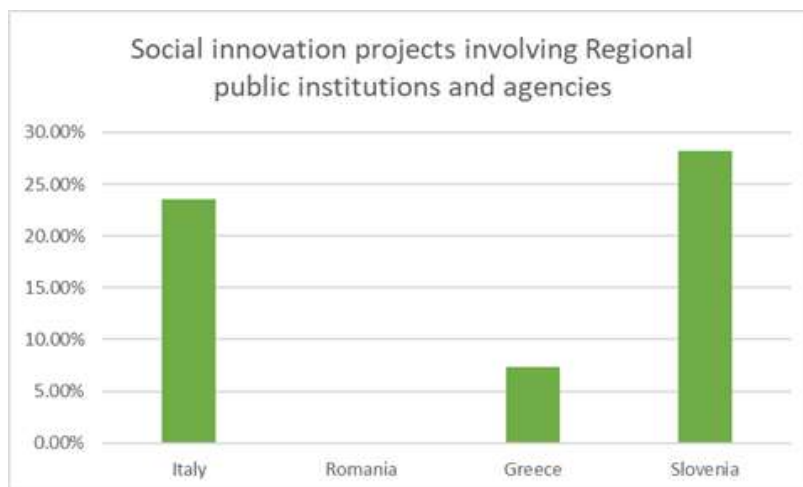


Figure 3.10

### 3.5.3 National public institutions and agencies

Even though they have an important role in promoting & funding social innovations, the national authorities in Greece and Romania still lack knowledge and understanding of the role and the potential of social innovation. In both countries the national authorities (namely the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity/Ministry of European Projects and Investments and the Greek Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) should design programs that support social innovation, their role so far was mostly limited to financing or developing national laws for the sector (e.g: for Romania, the Ministry of Labour is responsible for implementing the Social Economy Law and should support the social enterprises that have to be registered by this ministry under this law. Nevertheless, except managing the database with the >2000 social enterprises/work integration social enterprises, the ministry is not involved at all in developing this sector). Similarly, the Slovenian Ministries are providing the legislative framework and funding for social innovations.

Even though the Italian national discourse about social innovation is also very recent, Italy implemented starting 2018 the first fund dedicated to social innovation: the National Social Innovation Fund (Fondo per l'Innovazione Sociale - SIF). The Department of Civil Service has started the experimentation of the activities related to the Social Innovation Fund. The experimentation is divided into a three-year Program that, within the resources allocated by the Fund, finances social innovation projects of local administrations (capital municipalities and metropolitan cities) in the fields of social inclusion, cultural animation and the fight against early school leaving. Nevertheless, given the strong role of the private sector in supporting social innovations in Italy, the percentage of the mapped social innovations that involve national public institutions is lower in this country.

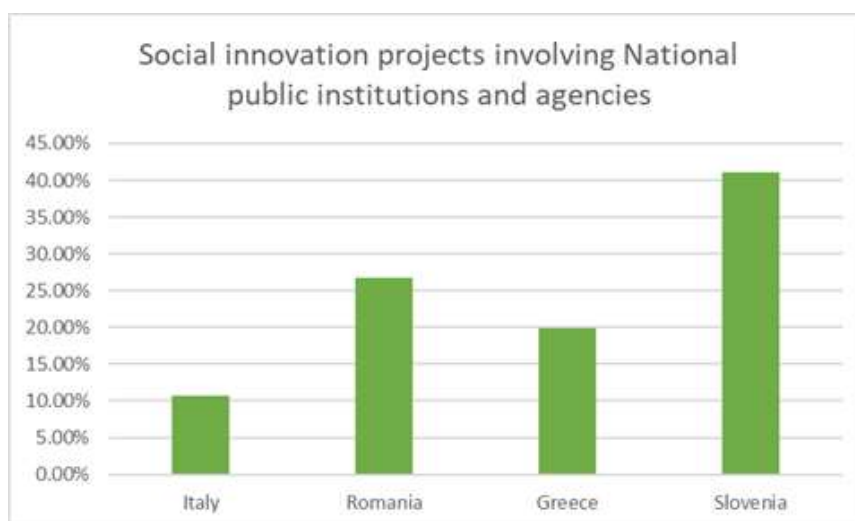


Figure 3.11

### 3.5.4 European institutions and agencies

In all countries European institutions and agencies play a very important role in funding social innovations. Romania traditionally uses less resources managed directly by the EU as there are important financing opportunities managed directly by the Romanian national authorities.

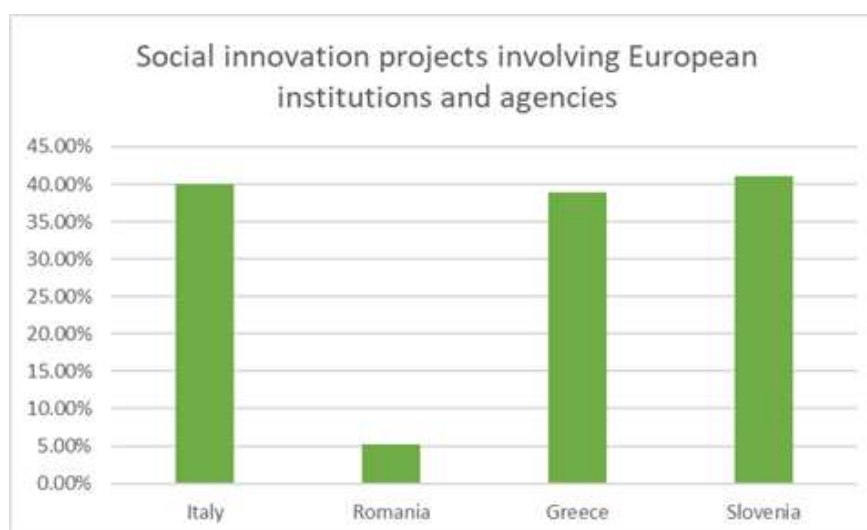


Figure 3.12

## 3.6 Relationships between stakeholders

The role of social innovation is growing in all analysed countries and thus the relationship between the stakeholders of the four ecosystems is also very dynamic. **It is clear that building stronger relationships within and across these ecosystems is needed, especially in the field of knowledge transfer.** Social innovation is mostly driven by the private sector (with some national peculiarities: Greece has a very strong citizens involvement, in Italy private companies and cooperatives have a strong role, in Romania and Slovenia social enterprises are the main drivers). European funding & support is crucial in all countries.

**Greece.** According to a recent panel entitled “Relations and Barriers among civil society actors in Greece” which took place in Athens online at HIGGS, April 22, 2021, conclusions included the observation that the key players among stakeholders in Greece are social enterprises, public institutions, academic institutions, foundations, philanthropy, embassies, and civil society organisations. This list is reflected in our current mapping exercise.

Another interesting observation of the panel was that roles tend to be divided in the following way:

- NGOs are often the initiators of a particular idea and partly involved in its implementation,
- Foundations are the usual donors but also increasingly involved in capacity building activities that help actors navigate road maps and methodologies to implement the project, backed up by the academic sector,
- Embassies with dynamic cultural institutions play a role in stressing the need to leave a legacy after the project, and
- Public institutions retain a weaker than expected presence and often retain a role of either giving permits and bureaucratic eligibility for activities in the public space or even just a symbolic sponsorship referred to as “under the aegis of” that usually helps the profile of an activity and its fundraising efforts.

It should be noted that there are many ventures in different geographies and communities that originate from informal groups/networks and initiate SI approaches and activities. These are quite often operating “under the radar” of public policies and funding, thus they are usually self-financed and either manage to get some seed/additional funding from philanthropic capital, or more often they are institutionalised as coops in order to maintain their activities and improve their sustainability.

**Romania.** The social innovation ecosystem in Romania is still very fragmented. There are some visible, vocal and involved stakeholders that act as drivers for the whole ecosystem, but there are still a lot of visible knowledge gaps. Social innovation is still not widely known and no coherent policy is present in this field in Romania.

















- Social entrepreneurs are usually the recipients of funds from national authorities (through ESF). They also receive support through accelerators led by associations/foundations (the acceleration services are also financed through ESF);
- National and local authorities are less interested in promoting social innovations (mostly because this concept is still unclear for them), but local public institutions have started over the past years to grow different innovative initiatives;
- Accelerators build projects to attract ESF money to implement their actions, but they face difficulties in building a pipeline of valuable social entrepreneurs/innovators for giving support/funds;
- Multinationals have started to develop financing programs for social innovators, but they still lack a long-term vision;
- Social entrepreneurs/innovators are less interested in acceleration services if a final investment is not on the discussion table.






































**Slovenia.** Social entrepreneurship and social innovation have become more important elements for society in the last few years. Wider society still perceives and connects social entrepreneurship with disability enterprises and employment of disabled persons, different kinds of subsidies and other similar topics. Society still doesn't connect social entrepreneurship with innovation, creativity and real entrepreneurial manner of operation. The government should have the role to improve the understanding of social entrepreneurship for a wider audience. The Ministry of economic development and technology established the Council for Social Entrepreneurship. Its main aim is to design the politics of development of social entrepreneurship by involving other ministries, government offices, municipalities, social partners and organisations of civil society. The support is in a way provided by the government and it still shows the lack of understanding of the role of social entrepreneurship. Mechanisms and support are not always well distributed and properly defined.

In **Italy** nowadays, social innovation is key to addressing the major contemporary social, economic, and environmental challenges. However, to effectively implement socially innovative solutions, there must be significant involvement of different groups of stakeholders. Accordingly, stakeholders' engagement in social innovation allows one to better understand the nature and potential solutions to specific challenges and the needs of the beneficiaries of social innovation. Stakeholders are often interlinked with one another as it is mutually beneficial for them to share a pool of resources with others who have a common interest. The relationship between different types of stakeholders enables the creation of solid networks of expertise and it increases the confidence around the projects' environment.

Additionally, having a large pool of financial and human resources enhances the coordination among various public and private ongoing initiatives, it facilitates their aggregation around thematic communities and enhances the capacity building of social actors.

Moreover, these relations encourage innovation stakeholders in using the available funds and in co-designing policies promoting and mainstreaming social innovation, while unlocking funding to support social innovation through the involvement of private financial resources and innovative participatory and citizen-led financial tools.

	Italy	Romania	Greece	Slovenia
<b>Citizens</b>				
Ideation & Design	Low	Low	Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Funding	Low	Low	Medium	Low
<b>Associations</b>				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Production & Delivery	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Funding	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Cooperatives (including social cooperatives)</b>				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Production & Delivery	High	Low	Low	Medium
Funding	Low	Low	Low	Medium
<b>Social Enterprises</b>				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Production & Delivery	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

Funding	Low	Low	Low	Low
Foundations				
Ideation & Design	Low	Low	Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Low	Low	Low	Low
Funding	High	Low	Medium	Low
Private companies				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Medium	Low	High
Production & Delivery	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Funding	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Incubators / accelerators				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Low	Low	High
Production & Delivery	Medium		Low	Medium
Funding	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Universities / Research institutions				
Ideation & Design	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Production & Delivery	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Funding	Low	Low	Low	Low
Local public institutions and agencies				
Ideation & Design	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Production & Delivery	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Funding	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Regional public institutions and agencies				
Ideation & Design	Medium		Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Low		Low	Medium
Funding	Low		Low	High
National public institutions and agencies				
Ideation & Design	Low	Low	Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Funding	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
European institutions and agencies				
Ideation & Design	Low	Low	Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Funding	High	High	Low	High
Multi-stakeholders				
Ideation & Design	Low		Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Medium		Low	Low
Funding	Low		Low	Low
Others				
Ideation & Design	Low		Low	Low
Production & Delivery	Low		Low	Low
Funding	Low		Low	Medium













**Table 3.1 Stakeholders' role and involvement in Social Innovation projects within the four countries. The High-Medium-Low characterization reflects the involvement of the stakeholder in a specific phase of social innovation projects, while the circle symbol reflects the general status of the stakeholder's involvement across projects' phases**

## 4 DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR THE PROMOTION AND MAINSTREAMING OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

### 4.1 Drivers and barriers

It is understood that “Policy makers are expected to create the right environment and develop instruments, policies and architecture that support collaboration, and the emergence and development of social innovation”. To facilitate this process the existing drivers and barriers for each of the four national ecosystems have been assessed and common thematic areas have been identified although the national peculiarities.

For the drivers, the thematic areas identified are:

DRIVERS				
Pillars of Drivers	Italy	Greece	Slovenia	Romania
<b>Status of the Ecosystem</b>				
Among social economy actors, the hybridization between sectors and type of organisations which leads to a higher number of new opportunities and possibilities	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW
Regions and Local Authorities interest	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Dynamism of small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups in developing technologies which benefit social and cultural needs.	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Universities and research centres are active both in multi-stakeholder partnerships to produce services/policies and in international research and institutional networks related to social innovation.	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW
Inspirational best practice examples in some communities	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM
<b>Legal Framework including policy tools</b>				
Existence of a Legislative Framework for societal challenges, including social economy actors and third sector	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Existence of Public Policy Tools. Such as public procurements, participatory regulations, co-production and co-design regulations, relevant studies and strategies, registries, etc.	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
<b>EU Support</b>				
Support provided by the European Commission, including Next Generation EU, ESF+ and other EU funds (ERDF, Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+).	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH

**Table 4.1 Drivers for the promotion and mainstreaming of social innovation. The High-Medium-Low characterization reflects the relevance of specific drivers, while the circle symbol reflects the average meaning given by the sum of the rows for each area of drivers**

Regarding the status of the ecosystem more specifically, by having a more mature field, Italy grants special attention to the structure of their ecosystem and its internal links and synergies, while for Greece and Slovenia the existence of a pluralistic ecosystem is considered a driver per se. On the other hand, for Romania, the participation of the private sector is understood as a well-noted driver for ecosystem development.

























The importance of the regulatory framework, supporting laws and tools are also highlighted by Greece, Slovenia and Romania. It is understandable though that the regulatory framework can be



both a driver and a barrier pending the views of the actors, however, its existence is recognized as the first necessary step towards the recognition, framing and development of Social Innovation.

Finally, all countries recognize the importance of EU Support both financially and institutionally. The policy prioritisation by the EU and the relevant EC programs and funding tools have assisted the actors in all countries either to kickstart or to mainstream their activities towards Social Innovation, thus providing the necessary environment for further development.

Regarding Barriers the thematic areas recognised are:

<b>BARRIERS</b>				
<b>Pillars of Barriers</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>Romania</b>
<b>Discourse about SI</b>				
New concept for National Authorities	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
New concept for Regional Authorities	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
New concept for Local Authorities	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
New concept for Social Economy Actors	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
New concept for Private Sector	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>Awareness</b>				
Awareness about funding	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Awareness about implemented projects among citizens	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
<b>Funding and Financing</b>				
Private sector funding	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
National Funding	LOW	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
Existence of Financing Tools	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
<b>Ecosystem Mapping and Networking</b>				
Mapping of existing SI	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Networking and collaboration culture	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
<b>Legal Framework including Political Prioritisation</b>				
Legal Framework including prioritisation in the political agenda	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH
Implementation mechanisms	MEDIUM	LOW		HIGH
Fiscal benefits	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	HIGH
Statistical data	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
<b>Lack of Capacity Building</b>				
Capacity building programmes with a geographical spread	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Knowledge of SI at all levels	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

**Table 4.2 Barriers against the promotion and mainstreaming of social innovation. The High-Medium-Low characterization reflects the relevance of specific barriers for each country, while the circle symbol reflects the average meaning given by the sum of the rows for each area of drivers**

For a new concept as Social Innovation is, it is understandable that barriers still prevail in the overall assessment.

The **New discourse at the national level** is considered as a worth noticing barrier by Italy and Greece mainly, although it is a reality for all countries. This brings a difficulty for National and Local Authorities, but also other actors, to comprehend the concept and its mechanisms, define it and differentiate it from other social actions. All public policies need a level of maturity to become understood at the national level and get the facilitation needed for mainstreaming.

The **lack of awareness** about the concept is also an important barrier for all countries. Either awareness about the concept, or the funding tools, or the implemented projects and their results, the current low awareness level is an important barrier for all actors.

**Low funding** mechanisms and **lack of financing tools** (e.g. bank credit lines, guarantees, etc.) is a major barrier identified by most of the implementing actors. Although funding exists from EU sources, there is low national and/or regional-local funding in all countries. Even if funding from ESF may be available, the public authorities, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept, do not channel it in a proper manner towards Social Innovation. On the other hand, the ESG environment, that the private sector currently operates in, has brought in Greece and Romania private sector funding that assist the SI implementation. This development however may also have, consequently, lower public sector involvement in implementing projects since there are difficulties in the public-private alignment. Availability of financing tools that will complement the Public Funding terms and conditions is of significant importance for Greece, since the banking system does not even understand the legal forms for some of the actors (e.g. Social Enterprises) making the implementation of some of the funded projects close to impossible.

The comprehensive **mapping of the ecosystem** that will lead to the facilitation of networking and collaborations with complementarity is a barrier for Greece and Italy. The countries consider that without an adequate mapping of the stakeholders/actors, their needs, problems, wills and expectations can also not be tracked and thus integrated properly into the forthcoming policy design.

Shortcomings in the existing **Regulatory framework** and the level of **political prioritisation** is an important barrier for Greece, Slovenia and Romania, while Italy has not reported this as a barrier. There are a variety of issues, of important or less important significance, which are related to the regulatory framework that influences Social Innovation. From concept definition to implementation mechanisms, to the diffusion of responsibilities within a variety of the national authorities, to the lack of incentives and data, all these issues lead to the lack of strategy and low political prioritisation at the national level.

Finally, the absence of comprehensive capacity building, spread geographically within the countries, in a variety of actors including institutional ones, and in a pluralistic thematic/sectorial palette, is much needed to mainstream SI.

## 4.2 Policy implementation

Based on the Drivers and Barriers identified in the previous section, the national reports incorporate a variety of Policy Recommendations to be taken into consideration. Since most of the recommendations are country-specific they are presented hereafter per country.

### Italy:

- Implementing the Third Sector reform which fosters, even more, the participation of social economy actors in the co-design and co-programming of policies and services.
- Renewing the Social Innovation Fund with greater participation of the ecosystem's actors at different institutional and territorial levels, by also supporting the use of co-design as an approach to policy design.
- Supporting practices of scaling up and scaling deep of social innovation models, by creating conditions within the public administration (e.g. among different sectors/departments of the same institution and/or among different EU funds Managing Authorities and/or between different governance levels) to challenge the broader institutional rules ("silos approach") that prevent to scale up social innovation models and best practices.
- Sustaining human-centred approaches to unlocking organizational change and delivering better and more efficient services.
- Working to support the implementation of the Digital and Green transition EU agenda providing social innovation approaches, models, and processes.
- Innovating public procurements to eliminate bureaucratic barriers and to make procurements more flexible and adaptable to participative processes of co-creation.
- Implementing the use of public regulations for the participation of citizens in decision-making and policy-making.
- Integrating policies devoted to technological innovation and those devoted to social innovation processes within the EU framework.
- Integrating different typologies of resources, such as European and national ones.
- Developing a multi-dimensional policy approach about economic resources and policy sectors.
- Promoting the use of new social finance tools to support social innovation projects.
- Developing capacity-building programs for public administration employees and street-level bureaucrats, which have the fundamental role of intermediaries between projects' beneficiaries and the public administration. Specific topics which the capacity building programs should address are listed below:
  - Design thinking;
  - Evaluation of the social impact;
  - Pay for performance outcome;
  - Public procurement;
  - Ethic and efficient use of digital infrastructure (data collection, data governance, privacy, platforms);

- Legality and social innovation, which include issues such as confiscated assets, criminal systems and rehabilitation programs;
- Urban commons and citizenship participation.

### Greece:

- A strategy study that will define an action plan for the operation of the Greek Competence Centre for Social Innovation is needed. This action plan should include activities for both awareness creation of the concept and the creation of an enabling ecosystem. Capacity-building actions are also needed in a set of themes including, needs assessment, problem tree analysis, project design, project cycle management, advocacy and fundraising, financial management and reporting, networking and stakeholders' engagement.
- At the policy level, an update of the legal framework is needed, to become more inclusive and more in line with EU policies on the subject, which will include an extensive stakeholder's consultation. The issue of the current silos in the regulatory and policymaking frameworks must be addressed effectively with the collaboration of all involved policymakers with the SE actors and SI communities, to develop a common language and establish a common understanding of the 3rd sector ecosystem, its different actors and impact potential.
- New financial tools have to be created that will address both the issue of funding but also the issue of financing, which is equally important for the ecosystem. The new programming period of ESF+, as well as the recovery funds that will be available in the forthcoming years, have to be designed in such a way as to be available for SI actions and for the use of the 3rd sector actors that have peculiarities (i.e. not-for-profit operations, no pre-financing capacity, etc.) in their business models.
- The issue of administrative barriers has to be addressed as well, with the simplification of the procedures to the greatest possible extent, and the recognition of the capacity of the actors to perform complex administrative functions that do not really provide any added value, or whose necessity is not compliant to their business model.
- Actions to encourage networking and collaborations within the ecosystem have to be designed and implemented, in collaboration and consultation with the field. The policymakers should encourage the creation of networks, or even thematic clusters, associations, and other formal groupings that will enhance cooperation, advocacy, visibility and representation.
- The drivers should be enhanced by assisting the ecosystem to thrive. The inclusion of the foundations and the private sector in the dialogue is an important step to achieve an alignment of policies and priorities, tools and methodologies.
- The proper design of programmes for SI funded by the ESF+ (as well as within further structural funds) through consultation with the ecosystem, will assist the further creation and development of SI.
- The enhancement of the thematic and geographical spread of the ecosystem is important since we consider that this diversification is one of its assets. Thematic collaboration, the regional upscaling, the dissemination of success stories, tools and methodologies are areas that need to be supported.

- The strong “leaders” of the ecosystem should play the role of mentors and promoters of SI, should be encouraged to do so and should be assisted to undertake this role.

#### Slovenia:

- Social Innovation ecosystem mapping and monitoring - Statistical and analytical data collection of the Social Innovation sector. In Slovenia, there is a lack of mapping and monitoring of actors in the Social Innovation sector on multiple levels – not only their existence but also their activities, value creation, the social impact achieved, as well as their economic stability and performance. Actions to take: Coordinated monitoring of statistics for all groups of Social Innovation actors and the social economy sector. Prepared annual reports for all groups of subjects of Social Innovation and social economy. New records of social economy entities at the ministry level.
- Create and implement a methodology to measure social impact. There is no methodology to measure social impact on a national level. Actions to take: Develop a methodology for measuring social impact. Develop a system for training Social Innovation stakeholders and public administration officials on measuring social impact.
- Building and development of a supportive environment for social entrepreneurship start-ups. There is a lack of support organisations that deal with social entrepreneurship initiatives and social start-ups in Slovenia. There is a lack of funding options for social entrepreneurship initiatives and social start-ups on local, regional, and national levels. Actions to take: 1. Networking and cooperation of individuals and organisations with the aim of developing Social Innovations and creating social entrepreneurial ideas and solutions through workshops, events, discussions aimed at creating new solutions and responses to the challenges we face in local environments. 2. Building and strengthening competencies for social entrepreneurship start-ups and training for social entrepreneurship, professional coaching, and mentoring for the start-up, operation, and growth of social enterprises. 3. Development of financial schemes and assistance in accessing financial resources. 4. Administrative-technical and marketing support and other services. 5. Development of competencies of support organisations. 6. Meetings and networking. 7. Transfer of good practices and sharing of common issues. 8. Provide technical support to start-ups and incorporation of Social Innovation initiatives; strengthen professional standards in the Social Innovation sector (training of experts).
- Social Innovation academy for public actors – creating Social Innovation ambassadors in public administration and creation of a competence centre for Social Innovation. Actions to take: 1. Informing stakeholders in the public sector about Social Innovation. 2. Motivating public sector stakeholders to contribute to improving the conditions for Social Innovation development. 3. Procedural improvements for social entrepreneurship entities working on Social Innovation projects and initiatives. 4. Preparation of information materials. 5. Implementation of information visits, meetings, training. 6. Collecting identified possible processes and procedural improvements for Social Innovation stakeholders.

#### Romania:

- Including in the next operational program for education and employment a priority axis with specific calls for proposals for social innovators. This could ensure a more targeted

approach with a more straightforward method to measure impact. We propose at least 2 types of calls to be launched:

- One call for the incubation of social innovations, in which solutions to various social problems or needs of the target groups can be quickly tested (maximum duration of the projects: 12 months). The aim of these projects will be to test innovative solutions and approaches and to gather information and document the application of solutions to draw lessons learned and directions for improvement.
  - One call for scaling up social innovation solutions, in which social innovation solutions tested or developed previously can be multiplied and scaled (e.g. by the incubation call or EaSI-funded projects). The call would fund projects lasting 3-4 years in which the impact of the funded solution could be generated, collected, evaluated and extended to the regional/national level or to as many categories of final beneficiaries as possible.
- Including in the next technical assistance program-specific capacity building activities in the field of social innovation targeting public authorities (national and local) and other possible social innovators.
  - Reform of the Social Economy Law and developing effective measures for its implementation at all levels – national & local; harmonisation of local legislation to the national law; including real fiscal incentives for the social enterprises.
  - Wide & real consultations with the social entrepreneurs in developing the reform of the Social Economy Law.
  - Promote social innovation and its impact on previous projects. Fonduri-structurale.ro together with the European Commission's Representation in Romania launched in 2014 the Structural Funds Gala, through which we promoted and awarded the best projects financed with EU money in our country. One of the sections of the awards gala was dedicated to impacting and it triggered valuable submissions. The Gala was re-edited in 2017 (it included a section as well for impact projects) and we plan to launch a new edition soon. This communication campaign was nominated for the Romanian PR Award (one of the highest prizes for communication in our country). The national authorities should back such activities that promote the best practices from projects implemented in similar communities.
  - Support the creation and piloting of alternative financing instruments and sustainable acceleration programs for social innovators: civic crowdfunding, social bonds.



## 5 CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS ECOSYSTEMs OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

The activities of mapping and analysing social innovations in Greece, Italy, Romania, and Slovenia underlined the great mushrooming of innovative projects, aiming at a more just and equal society. However, individual social innovations are not enough to produce systemic change. They need to be nurtured and scaled to reach impact. For this reason, to better capitalise on the potential of each social innovation, an ecosystem that encourages, promotes, and scales such innovations is an opportunity for the whole society.

The SEED partner countries have not achieved a mature ecosystem of social innovation yet, but they are all walking the path towards its development. The Greek partners emphasise the importance to create a fruitful institutional political environment through the unification and alignment at the legal level of all diverse laws and policies under one main inclusive strategy which connects all stakeholders and policies within the same interlinked program and action plan. The policies integration would allow the production of commonly regulated registries of actions and stakeholders, on the one hand, and a unified legal codification of Social Innovation meaning, on the other hand. The other two fundamental actions should be encouraging and facilitating the cooperation among public, private, and third sector actors, and creating a Social Innovation Fund to assist innovative projects.

The Italian partners reflect on their own particular territorial configuration which contributed to developing a network of metropolitan and regional ecosystems. The risk is that each small ecosystem would grow as a closed bubble. So, the implementation of a national strategy to link smaller ecosystems and create a communicative system among them is utterly needed. Another relevant factor that the Italian ecosystem should count on in the future is a large number of second-level organisations, representing numerous and various social economy actors widespread in the whole national territory. These actors need to play the role of intermediaries – a sort of brokers – between the local micro-networks and national and European actors.

The Romanian partners report the absence of a coherent system of promotion and diffusion of social innovation as a critical issue. The results are a deep confusion around the practical implications of social innovation and the impossibility to create a repertory of best practices that could help spread innovation. Besides generating a national repertory of best practices and developing a public campaign to promote results of successful projects, the crucial action to nurture the ecosystem development is establishing alternative financing instruments and sustainable acceleration programs for social innovators, such as civic crowdfunding and social bonds.

Finally, the Slovenian partners note a slow pace in the political process to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation, while it accounts for a very strong ICT and technology ecosystem as well as business incubators and technology park networks. The latter represent important resources to build up the Social Innovation ecosystem. Moreover, regional development agencies need to be involved as the support for local administrations. The last useful step is strengthening the network of different stakeholders and increasing acceptance of social innovation projects in various stakeholder groups.

In order to define concrete needed actions, each country identifies already specific tasks which the national competence centres should realise. The tasks are detailed in the following table:

Greece	<p>The competence centre should have a communication plan for the further promotion of the SI concept but also for all the social innovation actions that are already implemented.</p> <p>This communication should target public and private sector actors at its main core, but also other third sector operators that are not currently active in the sphere of social innovation.</p>
Italy	<p>The competence centre should work on applying an inclusive decision-making process guided by action learning approach and co-design of innovative policies. The competence centre should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the intermediary actor between the second level organisations and the public actors, working at the national and European levels;</li> <li>the co-designer of capacity-building programs in collaboration with other stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>Furthermore, it could have the function of facilitating the communication and diffusion of social innovations at the national level.</p> <p>All these tasks imply a constant and structured dialogue among public and private actors, in order to identify proper competences, tools, and solutions. The competence centre should supervise and facilitate this dialogue.</p>
Romania	<p>Given that the national competence centre is run by a private company together with associate partners, the capacity of the competence centre should first be enhanced. Afterward, it could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide training services for all the stakeholders in the ecosystem;</li> <li>gather valuable data on the needs of the ecosystem to create a guide for call for proposals;</li> <li>play an important role in promoting social innovation through the Structural Funds Gala communication campaign;</li> <li>facilitate the creation of new partnerships in the ecosystem;</li> <li>provide support for the managing authority in evaluating social innovation projects.</li> </ul>
Slovenia	<p>Slovenian SI competence centre will take the form of a Digital SI Lab that will support the network as a substantial part of the ecosystem, composed of four main groups of stakeholders – businesses; academia and education inst.; government; and individuals, NGOs, civil society org. Main envisioned activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>share, exchange and disseminate information, knowledge, and common values on SI;</li> <li>provide a virtual environment for collaboration of all stakeholders;</li> <li>organise events, identify mentors, and find potential investors;</li> <li>include government representatives and more.</li> </ul>

The virtual character of SI competence centre will enable harmonised development of SI ecosystem.
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**Table 5.1 Tasks of the future national competence centres in each country**

Finally, the necessity to acquire a common methodology to assess ecosystems of social innovation is brought up by all partner countries as an additional task for each competence centre. According to OECD report on “Building local social innovation ecosystem” (2021), there are a variety of approaches to social innovation ecosystem analysis, but some common elements can be found across several studied approaches. These elements include the existing institutional framework, the societal needs, and the resources available. All approaches also take into consideration the existing cultural dimensions at the local or national level and the availability of actors and relevant networks. These commonalities result in three main pillars which need to be addressed to analyse social innovation ecosystems (OECD 2021):

- “Framework conditions” pillar helps to describe the existing situation surrounding the social innovation ecosystem at the local level which includes the local culture and behaviours area, existing laws and regulations (at national and regional levels), the institutional framework, the existing community of social innovation actors, and the resources available. This pillar considers the relationships among the members of the ecosystem and their ability for co-operation. In a nutshell, this pillar describes the existing context.
- “Policy implementation” pillar helps to analyse and define the concrete measures taken to help social innovation actors in the context of the local ecosystem. It might include measures focused on creating a market for social innovations (demand-side measures) as well as measures improving the quality and quantity of social innovation (supply-side measures). Each territory would need to adopt its own set of measures. In summary, this pillar considers how to implement a variety of instruments to support social innovation.
- “Progress dynamics monitoring” pillar is important to spot the occurring changes to the framework conditions and to analyse the outcome of the measures that are taken in order to adjust the necessary policies. It includes relevant local indicators to monitor progress. This pillar serves to analyse and adjust necessary measures based on the objectives and needs.

Since the competence centres should play an important and active role in informing national and European policy levels, this methodology is suggested in order to better analyse drivers and barriers of local social innovation and to support the generation of effective ecosystems of social innovation, taking also into account the national specificities discussed above.

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