

SEED- Social innovation EcosystEm Development

TASK 1.3 – Ecosystem framework

Country report for SLOVENIA

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DRAFT

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This report follows Task 1.1 and Task 1.2. which concerned the top-down and bottom-up collection of Social Innovation projects in Slovenia. The bottom-up data collection was conducted by Center Noordung and the work was led by Paolo Landoni. The top-down data collection was conducted by Ministry of economic development and technology and the work was led by Patrizia Saroglia.

This document is a work in progress. It represents an initial overview of the existing projects of social innovation in Slovenia. Many projects have not been mapped from different reasons – in Slovenia entrepreneurship ecosystem is very developed, but the social entrepreneurship ecosystem less so. Also the term social innovation is not very widely known, so even if some entrepreneurs are creating social value and systemic change, they do not see themselves as social innovators and we might not have heard of them. So in reality, this is work in progress.

This report is organized as follows: In chapter 1 we describe the state of Social Innovation in Slovenia, giving an introductory picture on the use of the term, the actors involved and the activities and information gathered in ASIS project.

Chapter 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 try to describe the societal and cultural context, the objectives of innovative projects, their territorial context and the tools used to implement the projects. In some topics we might have not covered all the areas. In addition, each area is completed by one example of Slovenian innovative projects.

In Chapter 3, we describe the ecosystem of stakeholders involved in social innovation in Slovenia. We present the actors of social innovation divided in five main categories: Citizens and social movements; Social economy actors; Private company and incubators/accelerators; Universities and research centres; Public Institutions. As in the case of thematic areas, we describe each type of actors, then we provide one project which shows the role and importance of each type of stakeholder.

In Chapter 4, we discuss the existing drivers and barriers for social innovation in Slovenia and present possible suggestions for future policy implementation.

At the end, Chapter 5 summarises the features of the Slovenian ecosystem of social innovations and it concludes by describing the potential future tasks of the national competence centre.

Chapter 1. State of Social Innovation

The concept of social enterprise and social innovation is relatively new to Slovenia. The first study on the topic of social entrepreneurship (only) was conducted in 2004 - presented as a new model of entrepreneurship and social economy that should be introduced to the wider audiences (study was conducted by EIM – Economic Institute Maribor in cooperation with then JAPTI, now SPIRIT Slovenia). The terms were later used in the context of ESF-funded pilot projects launched in 2009 to support the development of social enterprises. Since then, interest and activity in the social enterprise and social innovation 'space' has grown. The impetus for this interest is in part driven by the economic crisis and connected to the disappointment of the masses with capitalism, resulting in the movements advocating new ways of organising (the economy and the system). At the same time, the Government 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. Tomažević, A. Aristovnik, Ljubljana, oktober 2018). The first definition of social innovation has also been introduced in this document and it states: 'social innovations are solutions to societal needs and problems for which the market and the public sector have no answer.'

A number of social innovation projects in Slovenia have been launched in the last decade. The majority of them have come as a result of individual entrepreneurial initiatives within more innovative organisations. The organisation of the first Slovenian Social Innovation Competition in 2012, which saw over 50 social innovation projects participate, was an important step which promoted SI and placed it on the agenda for the first time. The increasing popularity of social innovation 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 social innovation is often listed as a key selection criterion. There is however no harmonized methodology for evaluating social innovation projects.

Till 1st January 2015 the main responsibility for 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 enterprises. The focus now lies more with entrepreneurship and less with social innovation and inclusion (p. 51, Social Entrepreneurship: Case of Slovenia, N. Tomažević, A. Aristovnik, Ljubljana, oktober 2018).

The concept of Social Innovation in Slovenia is very much connected to and understood as solutions that come from bottom-up and deal with societal challenges on one side and as solutions that the government addresses with its policies to help those in need. We have two very different points of view and understandings of the concept.

Since 2018, we have started more systematically addressing this issue and have jointly communicated the topics of social innovation throughout the social innovation ecosystem with the help of EU funds and instruments. During the ASIS project we have identified more than 30 projects that have been funded by one of the EU instruments dedicated to further development of social innovation in different fields, mostly Interreg, Erasmus+, Horizon and also one project funded by Norway Grant.

Social Innovation is not mentioned in the media as a word. There are certain topics that we consider to be social innovation that are being addressed, like affordable housing, long-term unemployment, precarious work and the like. We do see it being more and more mentioned in the university discourses as well as in certain ministries and municipalities, but we believe this is mostly because of the EU projects these organisations are involved in, and due to the new EU policies being much more inclined to deal and develop social innovation ecosystem in the next financial perspective.

The mapping activities: Bottom-Up and Top-Down

Mapping of social innovation initiatives in Slovenia was done by two different entities. Bottom-up mapping was conducted by Center Noordung that is a public institution under the Ministry of economic development and technology and Municipality of Vitanje. As such it has been involved in an EU project where we have already done a mapping exercise for Slovenia. The methodology was different, so the SEED project WP1 methodology was a good addition to the work already done in the previous project, because the mapping was done in two steps. As mentioned above, Center Noordung was doing the bottom-up and the Ministry of Economic development and technology conducted the Top-down part of the mapping exercise.

Because of the work on ASIS project, we 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. We first created a questionnaire and included it in the newsletter we sent to our SI mailing list. We were asking the ecosystem actors to share with us the SI initiatives they know and would recommend. At the same time we were doing desk research and were listing the initiatives we knew ourselves. It is a challenge to get the whole country involved in the mapping process. We work on getting to know the actors in the field all the time,

but due to COVID-19 crisis, we have only been involved in online events and conferences, and there is much less networking being done in the virtual space. None the less we managed to get over 30 initiatives from different thematic areas on our bottom-up list.

Top-down mapping was done by the Ministry of Economic development and technology by the methodology provided by FGB. The data collection process gathered 8 top down projects promoted by 20 stakeholders/project partners.

Data sources used were collected and provided by Intermediate body, Ministry of economic development and technology, within the shared management of the Managing Authority for cohesion policy, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Public Administration, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and other public and private institutions and foundations, social enterprises implementing projects in public interest. Data sources are either from Slovenian projects, funded by ESF and ERDF, as well as from cross-border Interreg projects with the Slovenian participants (public and private) in the implementation of the projects.

The best practices proposed within this report, do not give an overall and exhaustive view of all valuable interventions implemented and ongoing at national level. They have been, in any case, chosen taking into account their particular and specific relevance to the common criteria set consistently with the purpose of analyzing, what innovation in itself initiatives are producing/have produced within the public and private institutions for public interest.

Chapter 2. Thematic areas of Social Innovation

Circular economy and environment

Green and sustainable are big and important words in Slovenia. Traditionally we consider our country and ourselves to be very in touch with nature and also very in tune with it's needs. In the last few decades, it has become clear that our industry and personal habits have gotten the best of us and our environment has been taking a hit. Quite a few initiatives have developed in nature's defence, coming from civil society.

Roadmap towards the Circular Economy in Slovenia The Roadmap was commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia. It was created as part of the activities of the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, the coordinator of

the Partnership for Green Economy of Slovenia, with the goal of implementing the strategic orientation of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to transition to a circular economy.¹

The central role of the circular economy in climate mitigation has been widely described and its potential for emissions abatement is both substantial and economically attractive. As a cross-cutting topic, circular economy is closely tied to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and included in key national documents and strategies such as the "Vision for Slovenia in 2050", the "Slovenian Development Strategy 2030" and Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S4) and will also enter into the country's long-term climate strategy that was adopted in July 2021. A clear goal of Slovenia's climate strategy is to transition to net-zero emissions and become climate neutral by 2050. In an unprecedented systemic effort, the key Slovenian government stakeholders and Ministries are exploring which activities should be directed by the Government and carried out by the stakeholders to develop an action plan to underpin the aforementioned ambitions and help meet the country's climate targets in the long run. Slovenia already has excellent institutions and companies ready to play a key role in taking forward the country's vision to become a circular economy leader. Slovenia's Strategic Research and Innovations Partnerships (SRIPs) and similar networks are clearly a key asset. They provide, alongside close liaison with the Government of Slovenia, a framework for collaboration and co-creation—with common purpose. In a national-wide approach, it is directed towards a multitude of Slovenian stakeholders including local communities and applies a system-based approach to enable a process for decarbonizing Slovenia's socio-economic system through circular economy principles.²

In March 2021, Slovenian Statistical Office first published the experimentally calculated circular economy indicators. With them, it wants to show Slovenia's progress in the transition to a circular economy, whose purpose is to reduce the need for raw materials and increase the exploitation of secondary raw materials and waste.³

The transition to a climate-neutral society will be inclusive, respecting the principles of climate justice. The costs and benefits of the transition will be divided justly, as the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures will also cover the most vulnerable groups.⁴

One sample project

Iskraemeco - Green Penguin

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https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/roadmap_towards_the_circular_economy_in_slovenia.pdf

² [Slovenia adopts Circular, Regenerative Economies Deep Demonstration \(climate-kic.org\)](#)

³ [Experimental statistics: Circular economy indicators, Slovenia, 2016-2019](#)

⁴ [New step towards Slovenia's climate neutrality | GOV.SI](#)

A project where digital technologies meet the demands of nature with the help of children. The Green Penguin combines smart technologies with the green transition to build environmental and digital literacy, starting with younger generations and gradually expanding to all age groups. Using smart digital technologies and gamification to achieve environmental and sustainability literacy among school children and significantly reduce the city's CO2 footprint.

Digital transformation and smart cities

Slovenia is the world number 1 exporter of ICT services per capita. Digital is embedded in our DNK as a result of systematic human development, quality pool of digital talent, developed ICT infrastructure and government commitment to boost the ICT sector as one of the national development priorities. Slovenian ICT companies and digital USER ecosystem are aiming to inspire you to take the digital transformation path with reliable and experienced partners with more than 2 decades of experience in digitalization and E-economy.

In July 2021 Slovenia's National Assembly appointed a digital transformation minister, heading the Digital Transformation Office, a new government body, and coordinating digital transformation activities across the government. The key reason for the appointment of a new minister was the substantial funding that Slovenia would get for digital transformation under the national recovery and resilience plan.

The Digital Innovation Hub (DIH)⁵ Slovenia Raises awareness and provides services for the growth of digital competences, exchange of digital experiences and examples of good practice at local, regional and international level; proposes to the government and provides access to data to promote entrepreneurship. DIH Slovenia is a central national point for providing, connecting and supporting business and technological knowledge, technologies, experimental and pilot environments, best practices, methodologies and other activities necessary to enable Slovenian industry to build digital competencies, model innovations and processes; support their digital transformation and raise their competitive advantages based on digitalisation.

Apart from Ljubljana and Maribor, Kranj⁶ is paving the way with a pilot project to become a smart city. Under the municipality's guidance, they are enabling the collection, display and analysis of data from smart meters for electricity, gas and water and smart sensors for air quality and traffic. Because we lack large cities in Slovenia, the future orientation will be towards smaller smart cities, smart regions, smart communities and smart villages.⁷

Smart Villages is a well-known concept in Slovenia, also due to the fact that the concept has been initiated by Slovenian Member of the European Parliament (MEP Franc Bogovič). MEP Franc Bogovič

⁵ [What is the Digital Innovation Hub of Slovenia \(DIH Slovenia\)? - Dih en](#)

⁶ [Kranj in Slovenia starts digital makeover to become smart city \(balkangreenenergynews.com\)](#)

⁷ [Slovenia – Smart Rural Areas \(smarrural21.eu\)](#)

promoted the initiative not only at the European level⁸, but also in the national context through supporting the organisation of several events in various regions of the country. In Slovenia, more than half of inhabitants live in the countryside and we would like to keep it this way. We are aware that many steps are needed to enable the development of agriculture. The development and resilience of the countryside is connected to the development and resilience of agriculture, and this is the prerequisite for development of smart villages.

One sample project

AMZS - Nomo

NOMO will be a free, intuitive and user-friendly service that will enable you to easily and efficiently meet your individual's daily mobility needs while saving money, time and reducing your carbon footprint. It places users at the core of mobility services and offers them customized solutions based on their individual needs. It encourages them to use sustainable forms of mobility in a transparent and efficient way.

Health

SRIP Health - Medicine is among the nine strategic areas in Slovenia recognized by the government to lead the way towards the social and economic transformation as one of the key strategic developmental objectives in Slovenia.⁹ In 2017 SIH EEIG got a mandate from the multiple helix partners to manage and lead a platform for collaboration of the cutting-edge industry, advanced science, state of the art research, advanced health practitioners and empowered patient groups as well as of the progressive support organizations. In June 2017 they got the support from the government to implement an ambitious roadmap to advance science, industry, health care centers, education and research institutions along with the supporting innovation systems involved in health and medicine in Slovenia.¹⁰

In July 2021 The Ministry of Health hosted a conference¹¹ on finding and implementing innovative solutions for resilient health systems. Reviewing new opportunities for stronger health systems in the light of new European support mechanisms.

⁸ [Conference highlights potential of 'smart villages' – EURACTIV.com](#)

⁹ [Slovenia - Slovenian ECHAlliance Ecosystem - ECHAlliance](#)

¹⁰ [SRIP | SIS EGIZ \(sis-egiz.eu\)](#)

¹¹ [Conference has shown that together we can build more resilient health systems better and faster - Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2021 \(europa.eu\)](#)

The digitalization of the healthcare sector¹² is a big challenge. Difficulties are not limited only to the application of digital tools or found exclusively in the Slovene national context; however, a digital transformation could help remedy many of the current downsides of the system. For instance, it could be an opportunity to increase the efficiency of the entire healthcare system, to improve patient treatment outcomes, to ensure long-term financial sustainability, to maintain the achieved high level of healthcare and its accessibility to all residents. Due to the Sars-Cov-2 epidemic and its profound impact on the health care system many medical doctors had to reconsider the use and accept digital solutions for the first time. The widespread introduction of telemedicine at the national level offers an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of other technologies as well: personalized medicine, payment according to the results of treatment, artificial intelligence, and others.

The importance of adopting technology in healthcare has become ever more evident during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The impact is vast, from improving workflows in hospitals, better diagnosis, more precise medication prescription and administration, and prevention.

Novartis in Slovenia and EIT Health were looking for fresh ideas and pioneers to create new augmented / mixed reality solutions (preferably with Microsoft HoloLens) for the healthcare industry. They organised a hackathon in Nov. 2021 to reach this goal.

Ljubljana University Incubator, in cooperation with EIT Health¹³, organised Innovation Days in Oct. 2021, a two-day competition for teams to hack solutions to challenges on the theme of "Work-health Balance". Innovation Days promotes health innovation among students across Europe.

One sample project

HealthDay.si

HealthDay.si programme is made specifically with the aim to support SMEs and Midcaps in their digital transformation as well as enhance their role as agents of transformation of the whole Slovenian health and care system. They do this by connecting stakeholders, across clusters and sectors, and identify specific needs for competencies development and internationalisation.

Education

National Education Institute Slovenia is the main national research, development and consultancy institution in the field of pre-school, primary and general secondary education. In Slovenia, we have

¹² [Digital healthcare in Slovenia - DIH UM](#)

¹³ [About us & DIH — HealthDay.si](#)

a big gap between the education the youth receives and the needs the country has for the workforce.¹⁴

Slovenia's focus is on **education, training and industry driven research** to support its offering to the high technology and other high value-added sectors such as information and communication technology, pharmaceuticals and life sciences. Its workforce has a high reputation for flair for technology and innovation thanks to a successful combination of a **long industrial tradition** and **quality formal schooling** as an important contributor to the skills of an individual and to human capital.

According to Eurostat, Slovenia meets two **Europe 2020 goals** regarding education: 43.4% of people aged between 30 and 34 have completed tertiary education in 2015 (24.6% in 2005) and 5% of those aged between 18 and 24 have left school early.

Not only the young but also those who are young at heart have **IT skills** and **digital literacy** and over 70% of the population can have a conversation in at least two foreign languages and command of two or more foreign languages. English, German and Italian are widely used and French language courses are very popular.

Enrolment in vocational and technical secondary schools has been at the same level for a couple of years: 47,500 in 2018. Data show that almost 76,000 students enrolled in **higher undergraduate and postgraduate studies** at universities and single higher education institutions in the academic year 2018/19.

In March 2021 Microsoft Slovenia, Fast Lane Central Eastern Europe, the Ministry of Public Administration, Adecco HR, the Digital Innovation Hub of Slovenia, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Primorska presented a new initiative called Digital Knowledge for the Jobs of the Future at Triglav Lab, for successful work and life in the digital age.¹⁵ The initiative addressed students, jobseekers and employees in the public and private sectors, who need to acquire additional knowledge and skills in order to be able to make the most of all the advantages of modern technologies. There are four free training programs for business and data analytics, application development and software development with little or no code, which also include practical online lectures by established Slovenian and foreign experts. The Ministry of Public Administration and Microsoft have also signed a memorandum of understanding, which provides for enhanced cooperation in the field of digital skills.¹⁶

¹⁴ [Quality workforce - Invest Slovenia](#)

¹⁵ [New Initiative for Upskilling Launched in Slovenia: Digital Knowledge for the Jobs of the Future - Fast Lane Slovenia \(fastlane-cee.net\)](#)

¹⁶ [Preparing young people in slovenia for the labour market | Investing in Youth: Slovenia | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

With COVID-19 and most students and teachers having to use the computer to conduct classes, we see no other way than to acquire the necessary digital skills for the general population. In our list of initiatives you can see many that target the youth, mainly developing skills to support them in finding a best matching working position and/or supporting them in their (social) entrepreneurial path.

One sample project

Scientific and Research Association for Art, Cultural and Educational Programmes and Technology **EPEKA**, Social Enterprise, was founded in 2008.

A non-governmental, non-profit organization, and have been operating by the principles of a social enterprise since 2013. In addition to youth activities, they are also active in the field of culture and arts, volunteering, ecology and promotion of intercultural dialogue. Currently, they are focusing on the international mobility of youth and informal education (acquisition of learning competencies) in the youth field. In 2016 they also established the EPEKA Youth Cooperative Society to support youth business.

Cultural heritage and creative industries

More than at any time before, the pandemic uncovered the immense contribution of culture and creativity to citizens' well-being, social innovation, economic growth, and international cooperation. Policymakers and businesses now increasingly recognize cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) as the key players in the construction of the "new normal".¹⁷

The Centre for Creativity or CzK (Center za kreativnost) was established in 2017 as an interdisciplinary platform to support Slovenia's cultural and creative sector (CCS). It operates under the auspices of the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) in Ljubljana.¹⁸

Slovenia stepped on the path of renovating, rebuilding and breathing new life into buildings in the early 2000s. Through revitalisation, cities, townships and private organisations are transforming these sites and structures into places that offer platforms for creative industries.¹⁹

Set in a modernist building in the centre of the town of Trbovlje, Delavski dom in Trbovlje (DDT)²⁰ is a local and a regional cultural centre, being the biggest such institution in the Zasavje region. Besides

¹⁷ [Future Unlocked! – Cultural and Creative Sectors as Agents of Change \(creativeforum.si\)](https://www.creativeforum.si/)

¹⁸ [Centre for Creativity - Culture of Slovenia](#)

¹⁹ [The Rebirth of Industrial Spaces through the Prism of Culture and Creativity - Culture of Slovenia](#)

²⁰ [Delavski dom Trbovlje Cultural Centre - Culture of Slovenia](#)

the venue's own diverse and ambitious cultural programme of music, film, theatre, puppetry and visual arts, the centre also runs a new media culture project called Trbovlje, New Media Setting. While DDT's name points to its historical role as a "home" for workers, that is, a meeting place built to provide a venue for a large number of social related activities, today, Delavski dom Trbovlje is home to a number of cultural and educational institutions, including a music school, thus meeting many of the cultural and social needs of the local and wider community.

Located in a 30 m² container object on the bank of the Ljubljanica River and just next to Tovarna Rog, RogLab²¹ is a rather elusive type of a cultural facility. Focused on the fields of design, architecture and visual arts, it serves as an interdisciplinary space for education, research and production.

Formerly a salt storehouse, Monfort²² is now a vast and quite magnificent exhibition and event space, situated right by the sea. Built during 1823 and 1827 and placed halfway between Portorož-Portorose and Piran-Pirano, it nowadays serves several functions. One part of the grand space is taken by the Monfort Contemporary Art Space and is managed by the Coastal Galleries. The second part houses a museum collection on traditional shipbuilding and the development of water sports.

One sample project **HeritageLab/ID20**

A vision to take the heritage innovation one step further led a team of young enthusiasts and entrepreneurs to establish the ID20 Institute. Based in Idrija, Slovenia, a former world's second largest mercury mine and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the intertwinement of heritage and technology created the perfect environment for innovation in business, service and creativity sectors.

Poverty

According to the 2020 Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), the at-risk-of-poverty rate in Slovenia was **12.4%**. This means that in 2020 about 254.000 people in Slovenia were living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is about 11.000 more than in the previous year. Slovenia ranks above the average in job and earnings, housing, health status, social connections, education and skills, work-life balance, environmental quality, and personal security. It is below average in income and wealth, civic engagement, and subjective well-being.²³

²¹ [RogLab - Culture of Slovenia](#)

²² [Monfort Exhibition Space - Culture of Slovenia](#)

²³ [Income, poverty and social exclusion indicators, Slovenia, 2019 \(stat.si\)](#)

The annual at-risk-of-poverty threshold for a one-member household was set at EUR 8,440; the net disposable monthly income of people below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold was thus below EUR 703 per equivalent adult person. The threshold for a four-member family with two adults and two children younger than 14 was set at EUR 1,477 per month and the threshold for a two-member household without children at EUR 1,055 per month.

Among the 243,000 persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, 90,000 were retired (18.2% of all retired persons), 60,000 of them were women and 30,000 men, 40,000 were persons in employment (4.5% of all persons in employment), 40,000 were unemployed (43.6% of all unemployed persons), 41,000 were underage children (10.5% of all children) and 32,000 were other persons (18.9% of all persons unable to work, homemakers, students, other inactive and unclassified persons).

In Slovenia, social transfers including pensions still have an important impact on decreasing the at-risk-of-poverty rate. If social transfers - family and social benefits - were not considered as income, the at-risk-of-poverty rate would amount to 22.0%. If also pensions were subtracted from income, the at-risk-of-poverty rate would increase to as much as 39.2%.

If we take the COVID-19 situation into account, Slovenia is now well into the 30% of the population being at risk of poverty or are actually experiencing poverty. Poverty is very much connected to the high cost of housing, low salaries and rising prices of food.

We see most discussions happening on the housing topic, neglect of elderly and malnutrition of school children. These issues are being addressed by the media, but the government has found no systemic solution. Most of the issues are being solved bottom up, with the support of NGOs.

One sample project

Kralji ulice - Homeless Aid and Self-Help Association

It brings together professionals and other individuals working on homelessness and related phenomena, as well as individuals experiencing homelessness and related social exclusion. This means that we are committed to studying, learning about and researching homelessness, to preventing homelessness, to improving the living conditions of homeless men and women, to developing practical forms of work on homelessness, and to publicising homelessness. We provide homeless people with professional help and support to integrate into formal and informal forms of assistance and facilitate and increase access to social resources.

Migration

Slovenia remains a transit country, as most migrants trying to reach the western part of the EU from Turkey use either the central route via Serbia or the route stemming from the Greek- Albanian border, along the Bosnian and Herzegovinian – Croatian – Slovenian corridor. In June 2019, the

Italian and Slovenian Border Police signed an agreement to foster the fight against irregular migration on the Balkan route. It will more specifically involve the implementation of mixed patrolling at the border between the two countries. Austria decided to reintroduce temporary border control at the Slovenian border from 12 November 2018 and extended its decision for an additional six months from mid-May to mid-November 2019.²⁴

In 2019, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 29.1%, to reach around 3 600. The majority of applicants came from Algeria (1 000), Morocco (700) and Pakistan (500).

Slovenia reacted to the COVID-19 crisis by providing multilingual information and medical care to immigrants and by covering all costs of their diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19, even for those who are not insured in the public health system. In addition, Slovenia offered immigrants the possibility to remain in the country and extended permits until 9 July, 2020, while quarantine for all new arrivals was mandatory.²⁵

There is an International Organization for Migration in Slovenia which currently offers family reunification support. They have been active in Slovenia since 1951.²⁶

We have a few initiatives that support and help employ immigrants, mostly in Ljubljana – like Skuhna, Druga violina...

One sample project

Skuhna

Skuhna is a restaurant and catering service offering authentic dishes from Africa, Asia and South America, prepared by international chefs (and immigrants). Thanks to the cultural richness of Skuhna's team, you can also experience cooking workshops spiced with culture and many interesting cultural events. Skuhna is a unique company, conceived and run by people born in the Global South. Skuhna is registered as a social enterprise.

²⁴ [Slovenia | International Migration Outlook 2020 | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

²⁵ [IOM Releases Recommendations to the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union | International Organization for Migration](#)

²⁶ [Family Reunification to Slovenia | Slovenia \(iom.int\)](#)

Urban regeneration

Slovenia is characterized by small and medium-sized cities, among which two of them have over 50.000 inhabitants. There is one larger metropolitan area around the capital city Ljubljana and several medium-sized urban areas, such as Maribor, Kranj, Celje, Velenje, Koper and Novo Mesto.

Although Slovenia's cities are rather small in European terms, some urban areas are sprawling and urban lifestyle prevails among its citizens.²⁷ The biggest challenges in Slovenia are urban sprawl and related mobility issues, degraded or underused inner urban areas, and energy efficiency.²⁸

In the previous two decades, Slovenia invested heavily in its motorway system, leaving behind all other modes of transport, and causing a sharp increase in transport related energy consumption. Particularly public transport now needs improvement, as well as conditions for biking and walking in towns and cities.²⁹

Another important issue is unemployment that is alarmingly high especially among young people. The autonomy of young people is challenged also by poor access to rental housing. Elderly, on the other hand, very often live in oversized individual houses in the suburbs or big apartments in the cities, which they often cannot maintain, causing additional challenges for urban regeneration.³⁰

In Ljubljana numerous green initiatives have been undertaken to regenerate the city, mitigate climate change and preserve ecosystems, while at the same time improving quality of life and boosting tourism. In the framework of "Vision Ljubljana 2025", the city has adopted several sustainability-oriented strategic documents, especially the:

Urban Master Plan (83% of all city development is directed towards renewing existing developed areas and brownfields). This is the most important planning instrument for green spaces in the city. Environment Protection Programme 2014-20, aiming to protect and enhance the natural environment in the city.³¹

One sample project

Skupnostni urbani EKO vrt - Urban Community ECO Garden

During the European Capital of Culture, the idea of the first community garden in Slovenia was conceived within the framework of the Urban Furrows programme together with the inhabitants of the city of Maribor. With the help of the Association of the Guardians of the Seeds, the idea was

²⁷ [Skupnostni urbani EKO vrt - Smart City Maribor](#)

²⁸ [Slovenia | URBACT](#)

²⁹ [Ljubljana: Nature-based Solutions \(NBS\) for Urban Regeneration and Wellbeing | Oppla](#)

³⁰ [Integrated Urban Regeneration Savsko Naselje | Architectuur](#)

³¹ [REgeneration of disused Industrial Sites through Creativity in Europe - Creative Europe Desk Slovenia \(ced-slovenia.eu\)](#)

realized in the area of the Radvanje Municipal Quarter, and due to the great interest in the project, the project has been expanded to the area of the Nova vas and Pobrežje Municipal Quarters.

Welfare and work

Existing inequalities are widening because of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups. Women, young people and those on the margins of society are consistently affected by job loss, poor work-life balance and financial insecurity. New findings show that difficulties in making ends meet increased significantly among those already in a precarious situation.³²

Findings also show that overall job loss in the EU continues to rise one year on with nearly 10% of those with work pre-pandemic now unemployed - an increase from 8% reported in summer 2020 and double the figure of spring 2020 (5%).

The number of teleworkers in spring 2021 fell as more workers returned to the office. Despite this, the desire to telework has not waned as most EU workers expressed a preference to work from home several times per week in the long term. As workers continue to work more autonomously from home and managers invest in ways to facilitate this, the COVID-19 crisis can be an opportunity for many businesses to move towards win-win arrangements.³³

While the pandemic is impacting on women across a range of areas, it is also placing a welcome spotlight on the structural gender inequalities that remain. Low wages and difficult working conditions in health and social care are increasingly under the microscope, as these workers are recognised for the critical value they provide.

Mental well-being has reached its lowest level across all age groups since the onset of the crisis over a year ago. This is especially prominent among young people and those who have lost their job. Existing inequalities are widening because of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups. Women, young people and those on the margins of society are consistently affected by job loss, poor work-life balance and financial insecurity.³⁴

As well as disease and death, COVID-19 has taken a mental toll on citizens as more fearing illness, economic hardship and uncertainty about the real impact of the crisis. Policymakers will need to

³² [Financial situation and security during COVID-19 | Eurofound \(europa.eu\)](#)

³³ [Working during COVID-19 | Eurofound \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁴ [Quality of life during COVID-19 | Eurofound \(europa.eu\)](#)

consider how prolonged restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have increased feelings of loneliness, depression and tension.

There are government measures to deal with the above issues, but some bottom-up initiatives have also spurred.

One sample project

Stara roba nova raba³⁵

A cooperative is a social enterprise that operates according to the principles of the community economy. It is an example of how marginalised people can come together and reuse discarded items to create something for themselves, the wider community and the environment.

Every item you donate, buy or order from the services means you are supporting everyone involved in the cooperative, which aims to employ homeless and other socially disadvantaged people and to further develop the "Stara roba nova raba" initiative.

Chapter 3. Stakeholders of Social Innovation

Short description of each stakeholder

Citizen movements, individuals, bottom-up initiatives and NGOs are very active in Slovenia. Mostly in the field of climate change and environment, but also in the housing sector and women's rights. They are very well organized and have successfully changed quite a few laws. A great example is the Inštitut 8. marec.³⁶

Cooperatives are a fast moving and fast developing force in Slovenia. We are distinguishing here between the cooperatives that are a part of the social economy and the traditional agricultural cooperatives that have a long history in Slovenia, and are NOT a part of the social economy as we understand it today. Social cooperatives operate not only in the interests of their members, but in the general interest for the benefit of all the inhabitants of a given territory or in a given community and are multi-stakeholder. The most successful cooperative in that field in Slovenia is the Cooperative Stara roba, nova raba (author's comment old goods new use) also a social enterprise whose basic purpose is employment, training, inclusion and support for people with experience of homelessness and other socially vulnerable people.

³⁵ [STARA ROBA, NOVA RABA – Posredovalnica rabljenih predmetov \(robaraba.si\)](http://robaraba.si)

³⁶ [Inštitut 8. marec - Inštitut 8. marec \(8marec.si\)](http://8marec.si)

There are currently (11.11.2021) 269 registered **social enterprises** in Slovenia. Drawing on EU operational definition, the social enterprise spectrum in Slovenia includes both organisations that have been inherited from the previous regime (traditional cooperatives and companies for the disabled), which provide the most significant contribution to GDP and employment creation in Slovenia, and recently established organisations (zavods; institutions and societies; foundations). Their role in the social innovation ecosystem is crucial.

SMEs are a part of the SI ecosystem - most of the time unknowingly, but we are actively looking for initiatives that come from the real sector and trying to engage and include them in the SI ecosystem. Most of them look for solutions that deal with a very specific challenge that is also their core business.

We have a very well developed business **Incubator and Accelerator** ecosystem in Slovenia. There are around 25 entities that offer support to businesses - mostly incubators that are financed by the Ministry of economic development and technology, some are university incubators, some incubators financed by regional development agencies, and a few private ones. We are happy to announce that Impact HUB Ljubljana is opening its doors in the next few months and with that we will have a first incubator focused specifically on social impact initiatives.

Universities and Research institutions are becoming actors in the SI ecosystem, mostly through EU projects. We also have 5 university programmes that include social economy as a subject to its students. Some universities also have knowledge transfer offices, that contribute to sector connectivity, youth employment and youth engagement in systems change.

Public institutions are of great importance in the development of the SI ecosystem in Slovenia. Ministries are proving the legislature and funding, municipalities are supporting the local ecosystems. Regional agencies are providing guidance and opportunities to municipalities and local actors. In Slovenia we see regional agencies as very important actors that link stakeholders that are creating the SI ecosystem. Recently a new call was published by the Ministry of economy where regional agencies will be the main actors and facilitators in creating the SE ecosystem in Slovenia.

Relations between the various stakeholders

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. It is the role of the government 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 organizations 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.

Sample projects

1. Led by a public institution

Ministry of public administration - Inovativen.si

The Inovativen.si project aims to increase the efficiency and quality of public administration, with the main objectives being the systemic implementation of innovative approaches with the user at the centre and the increased awareness and skills of public administration staff to use innovative working methods.

2. Led by a university or research institution

Učni poligon za samooskrbo Dole

In Modraže, in the municipality of Poljčane, there is a hamlet called Dole, which is named after the U-shaped surface, where water in the past carried away the top humus part of the soil, leaving the soil washed and compacted. The desire to grow their own food led to the decision to use this washed-out soil for subsistence farming in a completely sustainable way.

The Dole learning polygon shows new possibilities for increased self-sufficiency. Water collection facilities include water wells, rainwater harvesting tanks and a biodiversity nursery. For food production, there are high beds, mounds, raised beds, cake beds, biomass beds, cardboard beds and beds in trenches and on terraces. Plantations of chokeberries, blueberries, plums, malt trees, walnuts, hazelnuts, strawberries, vegetables, and herbs have been set up. Facilities include a dugout, a yurt, a greenhouse, a solar station, and natural toilets.

3. Led by a private company or incubators/accelerators

Feelif

We created a special form of Braille alphabet where instead of raised pins there were holes and the vibration of the phone. The Feelif company was founded in 2015. The focus of the company is simple. To develop and produce information systems for the blind and visually impaired. Our aim has always remained the same: To empower the blind and visually impaired by easily accessing information in the digital form. To help them become digitally sighted.

4. Led by a social economy actor

Sončna zadruga

Together towards green energy and energy self-sufficiency. We design, finance and implement green energy transition projects in residential, public and commercial buildings. Through energy

self-sufficiency projects, we create new economic activity in local areas or regions and prevent money from flowing out of these areas. Our aim is to spill over business surpluses to the benefit of the members of the cooperative (lower energy prices) and to develop the cooperative, not to share the profits among the owners.

5. Led by citizens

Ekologi brez meja

Ecologists Without Borders is committed to a world without waste, which we seek to achieve by raising awareness, mobilising and, above all, connecting individuals, decision-makers and organisations. Our mission is to identify new issues and provide data to influence changes in policies and habits. We are opinion leaders in the field of waste, focusing our efforts on waste prevention. We were founded on the back of two Clean Up Slovenia campaigns, which are considered to be the biggest volunteering events in the history of the independent country. We have brought together 280,000 individuals, companies, various associations, the Slovenian army, the police, municipalities, municipal services and even the President of the country, who awarded the association the Bronze Order of Merit. The campaign created the only Register of Wild Landfills in Slovenia.

Chapter 4. Drivers and barriers for the promotion and mainstreaming of social innovation

4.1. Drivers and barriers

Social innovation in Slovenia is still in its early stages and remains largely underdeveloped without a proper supporting environment for social innovators. The public support for social innovation is weak in Slovenia. It is resulting in a negative influence on the development of social entrepreneurship, in lack of information about social entrepreneurship/innovation and in no suitable support for ideas on the field of social entrepreneurship/innovation in practice. We are missing financing possibilities through microcredits and other financial instruments, consulting and public support. The government's support with accepting the Law and the Strategy was the first step, but the next steps are still missing. Slovenia has to put more focus on the promotion of social enterprises and education of social innovation, advisers and financial support on the field.

The challenge for the Government is to focus and assure more connected initiatives to stimulate and support development of social innovation. Actions should result in sustainable measures that will affect not only a few people or enterprises, but wider society. The fact is that many social enterprises have received at the start-up phase the governmental support, but they have collapsed when they had to start financing their activities at the market alone.

The main factors that are constraining development of social innovation in Slovenia are very rigorous legislation in the field of social entrepreneurship, the lack of well thought and continuous mechanisms of support. The problem is lack of funds and sometimes it seems that social enterprises stay behind, because their field of operation is not connected to high technology (technological research and development). The lack of investments (private and government) in the social innovation field is fostering social innovators to depend on themselves and on their own financial sources that are limited and insufficient. Beside funds the other big problem is the lack of business knowledge and experience of (potential) social innovators. The opportunities can be seen in private – public partnerships and better promotion of social entrepreneurship/innovation and its good practice. Sometimes the only barrier for start-ups are social innovators themselves.

There is a lack of social investors. We are also missing the mutual information systems and programs for start-ups in the field of social entrepreneurship. The positive news is that social innovation is opening new perspectives to people and awakening new energies in people for the changes in the society. Many young and highly educated people are deciding to become social entrepreneurs/innovators (many of them are women) and positive impact is already visible in the development of social changes. Social innovation has become an important element of surveys, diploma and master thesis in Slovenia.

At the government level there are two key actors: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology. Until recently, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities had been coordinating social entrepreneurship activities. However, this area has now been transferred to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, where the focus lies more with entrepreneurship. It is not clear which governmental body will promote social innovation in the future. Most of the support for social innovation is provided by **third sector** organisations.

Slovenia adopted the Social Entrepreneurship Act in 2011 which provided definitions of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. In 2018 Social Entrepreneurship Act was under novelization and is now for the first time using the term “social economy” in a legal sense. Social economy is defined as an umbrella concept that includes: 1. social enterprises, 2. non-for-profit non-governmental organizations - NGOs (associations, foundations, institutes, economic interest societies), 3. companies for employment of disabled people and employee-rehabilitations centres, 4. cooperatives.

Since 2015 the main responsibility for implementation of the Act lies with the Ministry of economic development and technology (Ministrstvo za gospodarski razvoj in tehnologijo) and its special sector - Department for Social Entrepreneurship. The sector carries out the legislative changes and runs subsidies calls and political promotion of social entrepreneurship, and to some extent also cooperatives and social economy in general.

There is a lack of any competent study on social innovation in Slovenia. There are no accepted standards, nor criteria regarding what constitutes social innovation. Therefore, it is hard to source and include all relevant stakeholders.³⁷ On the national level the important role for SI play also the below institutions:

- Ministry of Public Administration (Ministrstvo za javno upravo): has several priority tasks in the area of cooperation with non-governmental organisations (like preparation of the NGOs and Volunteering Development Strategy, monitoring development of the NGO sector, preparing systemic solutions for the development of NGOs and voluntary work, etc.).
- Employment Service of Slovenia (Zavod RS za zaposlovanje): carries out all the Active employment policy measures, which includes most subsidies for employment on national level.
- SPIRIT Slovenia - Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Foreign Investments and Technology (Javna agencija Republike Slovenije za spodbujanje podjetništva, internacionalizacije, tujih investicij in tehnologije): strives to become an institution that in cooperation with stakeholders offers Slovenian companies effective and comprehensive support for development and promotion on the global competitive market. It renders its services according to the one-stop-shop principle as it merges all of the key activities required by companies at all stages of their life cycles under one roof.
- Chambers of commerce and craft (Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije - GZS, Obrtna zbornica etc.): strong partners in so called “social dialog” which is a formal political process, but are unfortunately not opened to cooperatives and associations, only classical companies are members.
- Ministry of Finance (Ministrstvo za finance): is more or less rejective, therefore there is a need to prepare financial arguments that would convince Ministry of finance to give way for better involvement of social enterprises in public procurement processes and to make way for tax reductions and tax exemptions for social enterprises and NGOs in general.
- BAMC d.d. - Bank Assets Management Company d.d. (DUTB d.d. – Družba za upravljanje terjatev bank d.d.): there is a big potential for development of worker cooperatives through worker-buy-outs because DUTB is selling out bank assets from companies in bankruptcy or restructuring.
- Local self-government - municipalities and cities: the law on social entrepreneurship is giving strong importance and responsibility for development of social entrepreneurship to the local self-government units (municipalities and cities). But they are independent and must be

³⁷ [Coopertative Movement In Slovenia - Wazo Magazine](#)

smoothly convinced to become stronger partners in the development of social enterprises and social economy in general.

The Social Entrepreneurship Center at the University of Ljubljana brings together the University and 6 members of University with the aim to develop, research, educate, consult and provide other support activities for social entrepreneurs. The Center was established by the University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Work, Faculty of Administration and Faculty of Education to set up an applied framework for research and development that connects researchers, educators and students from different areas with the economy and non-governmental sector, while offering potentials for cooperation to all those interested in the topic.³⁸

General awareness of social innovation is very low, and people do not talk about it, they don't discuss issues or opportunities or solutions.³⁹ Society is either dealing with economic recovery or blaming the government for the situation we find ourselves in. Looking for alternative innovative solutions is not being communicated, is not being taught in schools and you can't hear about it in the media. We have work to do.⁴⁰

Drivers	Barriers
Tradition of social entrepreneurship in Slovenia. Know-how of cooperatives, private associations and companies for the disabled.	low political ethics/unstable government
SI definition in legislature & SE law	low salaries
development strategy for Slovenia 2030	focus on economic development
vision for Slovenia 2050	aging population
multiple ministries are addressing societal challenges	underdeveloped mechanisms for statistical and analytical monitoring of SE/SI
The importance of social innovation financing with the ESF/ERDF funds in upcoming financial perspective;	dispersed and uncoordinated legislative frameworks and support mechanisms
multiple programmes for skills development	negative perception of SE/SI sector hindering development of specialized support services

³⁸ [Microsoft Word - StateOfTheArtReportSI \(ideannovaship.eu\)](http://ideannovaship.eu)

³⁹ [Social-Entrepreneurship Case-of-Slovenia.pdf \(zavod14.si\)](http://zavod14.si)

⁴⁰ [Social entrepreneurship in Slovenia - Interreg \(interreg-central.eu\)](http://interreg-central.eu)

Existing and rapidly growing support in terms of incubators, coworking spaces, academies, networking events;	rigid banking system
Existence of numerous initiatives in local communities.	Lack of knowledge and policy making regarding social entrepreneurship in the government structures
Strong and important NGOs community working towards social causes – good know how of the pressing issues.	Lack of knowledge on benefits and opportunities for social entrepreneurship within municipalities;
Register of social enterprises with potential for higher visibility and future monitoring, analysis of the market;	No fiscal benefits available to registered social enterprises
Study on measuring the social impact currently under preparation	There is still a misunderstanding/confusion between the term social enterprise and organisation structures under the past socialist system.

4.2. Policy implementation⁴¹

1. Social Innovation ecosystem mapping and monitoring - Statistical and analytical data collection of 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, social impact achieved, as well as their economic stability and performance. Therefore, we believe this is a key measure for the development of the Social Innovation sector in Slovenia, as there is currently no possibility of determining baseline values, monitoring criteria, performance criteria, etc. for the Social Innovation sector, so that strategies, measures and evaluations can be designed appropriately. Once companies create value, this value needs to be measured, the same applies to the social impact they achieve – it needs to be measured. Key measure for the development of Social Innovation should be to identify potential areas / domains relevant for Social Innovation.

Further 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

⁴¹ ASIS project policy recommendations: [WPT5 - ASIS Country Specific Public Policy Guide to Support Social Innovation - ASIS \(socialinnovationstrategy.eu\)](http://socialinnovationstrategy.eu)

Innovation and social economy. New records of social economy entities at the ministry level. Provision of staff with contractors (SURS – national statistical office and AJPES - Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services). Designing the parameters of statistical and analytical monitoring of the sector. Carrying out pilot monitoring and analysis. Should be funded by the Ministry of Economy.

If what we propose is implemented, we expect the following results: Comprehensive Social Innovation sector monitoring and measurement system. New record system at the ministry level. Defining appropriate indicators, relevant for measurement of Social Innovation.

2. Create and implement a methodology to measure social impact

There is no methodology to measure social impact on a national level. The preparation of the methodology is demanding, so it would be good to give priority to the consortium over the independent contractor, to require excellent references of the consortium, and to carry out the public procurement. This process needs sufficient time to be implemented.

Further 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. Implement public procurement for the preparation of methodology for measuring social impact and the implementation of training workshops for Social Innovation stakeholders on measuring social impact. Should be funded by the Ministry of Economy (min. 50.000 €).

If what we propose is implemented, we expect the following results: Methodology in place for measuring social impact. Trained individuals (Social Innovation actors and public administration) for conducting Social Innovation measurements. Yearly increase of the companies measuring social impact within their organizations by 5%.

3. Building and development of supporting environment for social entrepreneurship start-ups

There is a lack of support organizations that deal with social entrepreneurship initiatives and start-ups in Slovenia. Very few supporting institutions and incubators are focused on this sector. No national consortium to guide and strategize the ecosystem or to support social entrepreneurship with technical support and other competences. There is a lack of funding options for social entrepreneurship initiatives and start-ups on local, regional, and national levels.

Further actions to take:

1. Networking and cooperation of individuals and organizations 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 starting start-ups of social entrepreneurial enterprises and their employees - development and organization of appropriate education and training for social entrepreneurship, professional counseling, 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 organizations
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)

If what we propose is implemented, we expect the following results:

- Support provided to 100 social entrepreneurship entities and Social Innovation initiatives
- 5 active professional support programmes
- An operating national network in the social entrepreneurship sector
- Involvement in 5 international networks
- 10 qualified social entrepreneurship and Social Innovation experts

4. Social Innovation academy for public actors – creating Social Innovation ambassadors in public administration and creation of competence centres for Social Innovation

Due to the lack of trust in and respect for Social Innovation, it happens that the social environment in Slovenia in many cases does not accept but rather rejects social entrepreneurs as "strange", which is reflected not only on an informal level, but also e.g. in the case of smaller opportunities for obtaining funds from banks (lending and other financial mechanisms), the unequal position of social enterprises in comparison to different organizational forms, etc. It is crucial to be aware that with small procedural improvements with a minimal financial investment, we can make a significant contribution to better conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship and Social

Innovation sectors. For example, the problem of the impossibility of entering cooperatives in the register of voluntary organizations, which could be eliminated by procedural improvement or minimal changes in the rules at the internal levels of ministry bodies. One of the objectives of this measure is to improve and harmonize professional standards in the field of social entrepreneurship & Social Innovation.

Further 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, trainings
6. Collecting identified possible processes and procedural improvements for Social Innovation stakeholders

If what we propose is implemented, we expect the following results:

- Establishment of a competence center for Social Innovation
- Regular training sessions conducted (Social Innovation academy for public actors)
- Specific number of informed individuals in the public sector – so called Social Innovation ambassadors (track and keep a record)
- Additional informed individuals in the financial and economy sector, research and education institutions, business support institutions
- Digital inclusion, digital competences, digital literacy, decentralized digital network platform

Conclusion: Towards an ecosystem of social innovation

Weak political will to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation can be noted. On the other hand, we do have a very strong ICT and technology ecosystems as well as business incubators and technology park network that we can use as resources or support in building up the Social Innovation support ecosystem. Regional development agencies are local administration support organizations that will need to be involved in the process of building up a Social Innovation ecosystem. What we see as the future steps is the development and maintenance

of networks, capacity building and the creation of awareness to increase acceptance in various stakeholder groups.

THE new way to see innovation is to include criteria of social innovation in all forms of innovation. The new vision of innovation is social innovation = innovations that answers societal and environmental challenges, through a collaborative approach and with a positive, sustainable, and measurable impact. Public policies and intermediary organizations should break down the barriers between the different forms of innovation and economic sectors and link innovation to societal challenges. (Christine Andre, Oxalis)

What we call Social Innovation is a new answer to social needs or societal challenges, regardless of the nature of innovation (technology, services, new uses...), through a collaborative approach that involves beneficiaries, users and affected stakeholders and that has a positive, sustainable, and measurable impact. (ASIS project definition of Social innovation)

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 organized in associations, cooperatives, companies or as mere citizens. Today, the time has come 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. This is a real challenge for these two worlds, which have long been distant and distrustful of each other.

“Systemic conditions” that can increase the success factors of Social Innovation development are:

Variety and diversity of stakeholders

Strong political support to design and carry out Social Innovation programs

Highly skilled and motivated staff

Partnerships based on the culture of dialogue

Raise Social Innovation awareness and train staff about Social Innovation

Develop the 6 phases model (Mulgan 2010, p.12, 13)⁴² as Social Innovation process

Empower local communities and identify Social Innovation ambassadors

Integrate Social Innovation into traditional businesses

Use advanced technologies to strengthen Social Innovation

Create and use tools to monitor and evaluate social impact

Slovenian Digital SI Lab will represent an upgraded solution of the existing SI platform ecosystem in Slovenia, which was established within ASIS (Alpine space social innovation project), supported

⁴² Mulgan, Geoff; Murray, Robin; Caulier-Grice, Julie (2010): The Open Book of Social Innovation. In Social Innovator Series: Ways to Design, Develop and Grow Social Innovation.

by the expert group and implemented by Center Noordung in Slovenia. It will be upgraded by virtual solution, which will serve as supporting 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 is to create impact for the economy and the society. Digital SI Lab will support the network as a substantial part of the ecosystem, composed by 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 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 informal collaboration. (Elena Dokuzov, MGRT)

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. Only through new, innovative partnerships (i.e. citizens + cities and/or private + public + citizens partnerships) can we build sustainable bridges.

Former EU commissioner for transport, Violeta Bulc recently posted (LinkedIn, 13.2.2021): ‘Innovation in politics is needed for an inclusive world that thrives.’ We have discussed that public policy can both support SI and be socially innovative in itself. Policymakers can be social innovators, when using SI principles in the way they design new policies, programs, and initiatives.⁴³ We call these individuals SI ambassadors. These individuals would also instil the new values of cooperation, collaboration, participatory democracy, bottom-up approach, systemic vision, and others. The global network of Impact Hubs would say they expand positive impact in the world, combining resources and expertise into action.⁴⁴

Social Innovation is ultimately a change in power relations since the problems we are aiming at overcoming are anchored in existing institutional practices.⁴⁵ The actions we take now should change the fundamental practices in the current system. Changes in attitude and ethical values, as well as the use of innovative tools and practices by policy makers are of grave importance if we aim

⁴³ Social Innovation Community, Social Innovation and policymaking (2016 – 2019)

⁴⁴ The Impact Hub Story – 8 ways to make a difference around the World; Csont (2020)

⁴⁵ Ferreira, Silvia and Hulgard, Lars (2010): Social Innovation and Public Policy



to build an improved system that is more fit for current societal challenges and look to the future without fear.

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