



Facilitating United Approaches to Social Innovation in Europe (FUSE)

FUSE is building up national competence centres for social innovation in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland and Portugal. FUSE is seeking to improve the effectiveness of the ESF+ as a social innovation instrument, relying on local initiatives and cross-sectoral partnerships working towards new organisational approaches to work, learning, and community development. FUSE also mobilises experts from the Euclid Network and the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA).

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

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

The national competence centres will focus on several functions:

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

Expected results for each country



Competence centre for social innovation



Blueprint for a strategy and action plan



Analysis of strengths, weakness and sources of inspiration



Collection of initiatives started or replicated

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

Overview of Facilitating United Approaches to Social Innovation in Europe (FUSE)

28 organisations



Bulgaria	Cyprus	Ireland	Portugal	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Change Foundation, BCause Foundation, Bulgarian Centre for No-Profit Law, Cleantech Bulgaria, The Business Institute ■ Habitat for Humanity Bulgaria, Karin Dom, Trust for Social Achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Center for Social Innovation, SYNTHESIS Center for Research and Education ■ Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, University of Nicosia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rethink Ireland ■ Genio Trust ■ National Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, Social Finance Foundation, Social Impact Ireland, The Community Foundation for Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, Department of Rural and Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cohesion & Development Agency (including Portugal Social Innovation) ■ Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics, SCML-House of Impact, Bank Montepio 	<p>EU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Euclid Network, European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA)
■ Coordinator	■ Co-applicant	■ Associate organisation		

Key contact points

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Project website fuseproject.eu





Background

- Rather than looking at countries' experiences of social innovation, the project takes an asset-based approach to stocktake, collate and share knowledge, know-how and tools in order to develop and support social innovation projects and stakeholders in practice.

Activities planned at national level

◎ Bulgaria

- Bulgarian partners will map the national social innovation ecosystem to assess gaps, opportunities and main stakeholders.
- They will assess the capacity of social entrepreneurship using the Index of Social Entrepreneurship developed by BCause Foundation and Bulgarian Centre for No-Profit Law.
- They will create a national analyses of the social innovation ecosystem and share it with the media, businesses, public sector institutions and communities.

◎ Cyprus

- Cypriot partners will map the national social innovation ecosystem, key stakeholders and networks to assess gaps, opportunities and key targets for social innovation.
- They will prepare an online survey, targeting relevant groups, to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and services in social innovation.
- They will organise a series of roundtable discussions to collect, exchange and analyse ideas that could usefully be explored in a shared strategy for social innovation.
- They will develop policy recommendations as a blueprint for strategy and action to support social innovation in Cyprus.

◎ Ireland

- Irish partners will map the national social innovation ecosystem and assess its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- They will establish a consultative advisory board for the national competence centre, encompassing a cross-section of key social innovation players, reflecting regional and gender balance.
- They will engage stakeholders to facilitate wider

community engagement and raise awareness of the national competence centre and potential to use ESF+ to grow capacity for social innovation.

- They will identify opportunities for capacity-building, financial support and regulatory enhancement in innovation more broadly by collaborating with a range of parties.
- Adopting an ecosystem approach, they will engage with key social innovation stakeholders to create a joint blueprint for a strategy and action plan to support social innovation in Ireland.

◎ Portugal

- Portuguese partners together with key regional stakeholders will map the national social innovation ecosystem and produce a strengths/weaknesses analysis, including a regional impact assessment contributing for a prospective exercise to inform practitioners and decision-makers.
- They will establish five Regional Social Innovation Observatories (North, Centre, Lisbon, Alentejo, Algarve) to map high-impact social innovations, identify potential public-private-partnerships, share knowledge and best practices, and conduct regional impact assessments to complement those at project level and national level.
- They will refine, expand and simplify the qualification process for social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives (projects implementing or developing an innovative solution for one or more social problems), as well as existing public financing instruments for scaling social innovation.
- They will establish a National Advisory Committee to foster engagement with national stakeholders through working groups that will regularly respond to the identified priorities and exchange best practice.
- They will test pathways to simplify bureaucratic processes for beneficiaries and managing authorities.

Adopting an ecosystems approach to competence centres for social innovation

- A quadruple helix approach relies on establishing synergies, networking and collaboration between academic, industry, government and civil society players. This model recognises the wider role of innovation in society as a way to tackle 'grand challenges' and as a potential driver of transformative change. The national competence centres for social innovation have the potential to make a real and lasting impact by working to build the capacities of key social innovation players across government, academia, industry and civil society, strengthening and enhancing their capacity to act, and encouraging cross-sectoral experimentation and new and collaborative ways of working.

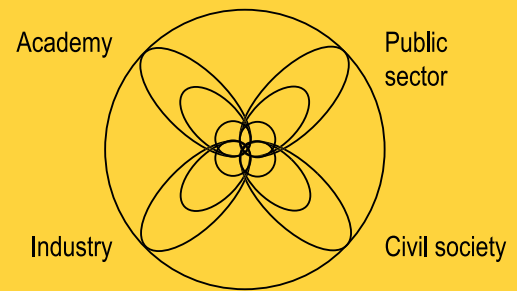


Figure 1 'Quadruple Helix Collaboration' Source: Alfonsi, A. et al. (2020). D6.5 Progress Report Final Version, a deliverable of the Horizon 2020 project Reconfiguring Research and Innovation Constellations (RICONFIGURE)

Activities planned at transnational level

- FUSE will create an open learning environment, encouraging peer-to-peer exchange, supported by a knowledge and resource repository. It will enable all partners to devise a peer-to-peer learning model, with core modules to facilitate coaching and mentoring between national competence centres. The goal will be to develop a shared repository of approaches, tools and methods that can be tailored to each competence centre.
- It will develop a guide about using ESF+ to support social innovation designed for managing authorities and competence centres, this guide will outline key concepts, approaches and lessons learned from the 2014-2020 programming period.
- FUSE will scale up two socially innovative projects by collaborating with national investment banks and private investment funds. It will develop a prototype of new scaling pathways.

Skills inventory exercise

All project partners will undertake a 'Skills Inventory for Supporting Social Innovation', a self-assessment exercise enabling them to rate their level of proficiency in supporting and promoting social innovation and in the specific activities required from competence centres. The resulting inventory will enable the FUSE to pursue an asset-based approach to peer learning and mutual exchange, highlighting the unique strengths of each competence centre. It will also be used to identify competence centres' learning needs and develop tailored learning plans for i) specific activities to be undertaken and/or ii) additional coaching or mentoring needed. This exercise will be used to plan subsequent peer learning activities.

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

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



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