



Co-funded by the
European Union

Formulation of Innovative Social Areas in the EU

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What Is Social Innovation?



New solutions addressing social needs



Creates new social relationships



Differs from purely technological innovation

What is Social Innovation?

“...The development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. It represents new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interactions. It is aimed at improving human wellbeing. Social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance individuals' capacity to act.

European Commission, 2013”

Social in both their ends and their means

Social Ends



Meeting social needs



Improving human wellbeing

Social Means



New social relationships



Enhancing individuals' capacity to act

Why SI Matters for the EU



A response to
complex global
challenges



Strengthens
welfare systems



Improves
democratic
legitimacy



Policy Foundation: European Pillar of Social Rights

20 guiding principles

Equal opportunities, fair work, inclusion

Framework for modern social policy

The Social Economy: A Pillar of the European Model

2.8 million

social economy enterprises in the EU.



of all businesses in the EU.

13.6 million

people employed, about 6.2% of the EU's employees.



5.5 million

equivalent full-time workers mobilised as volunteers.



The social economy is anchored at the local level, fostering socio-economic cohesion by promoting values like solidarity, participation, and cooperation. Its business models aim to reinvest most profits back into the organisation or a social cause.

EU's Strategic Approach



SI INTEGRATED IN ESF+
REGULATION



MANDATORY PRIORITY IN
MEMBER STATES

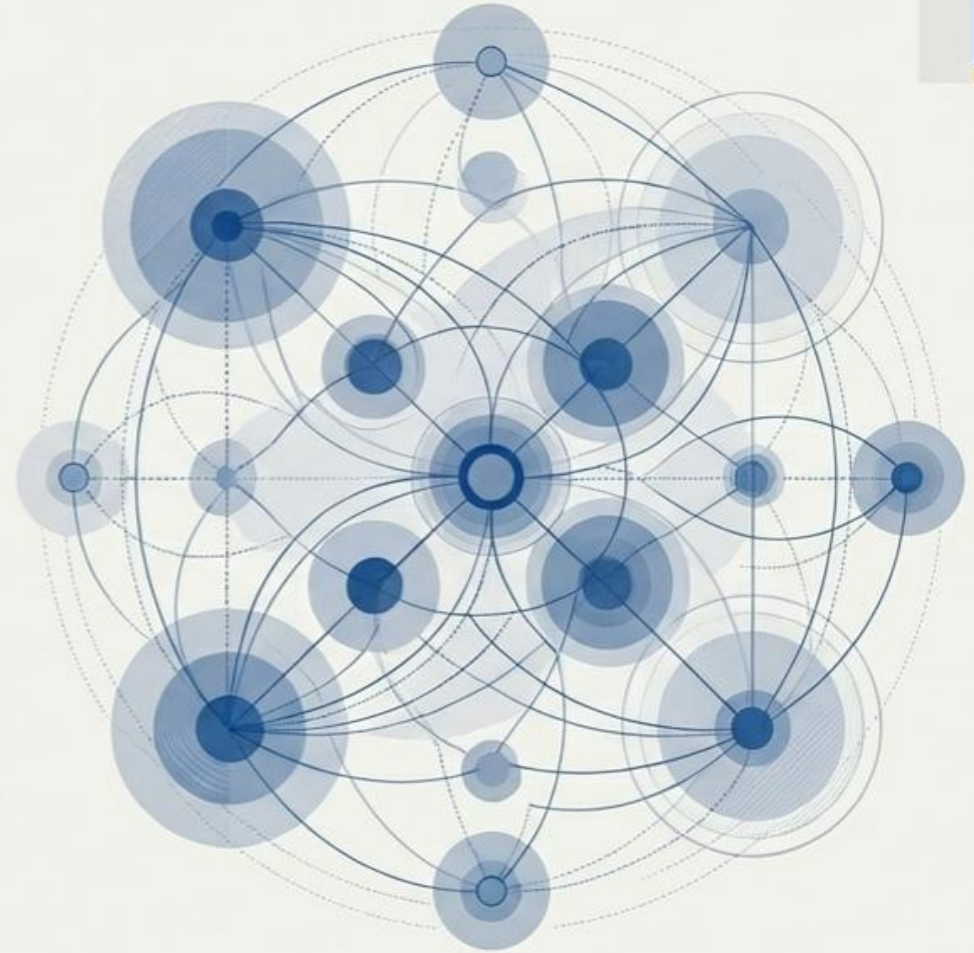


FOCUS ON LONG-TERM
SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

The Imperative: Responding to Europe's 'Wicked Challenges'

In today's world, we face inter-connected challenges, increasing income inequality, and significant economic and social disparities. This “**permacrisis**” demands an expansion of social policy objectives and better coordinated social outcomes.

“Wicked challenges” should **not** be thought of as problems to be solved per se, but **conditions to be managed**. Social innovation provides the new ways of doing that **put citizens at the centre of managing these conditions**.





Key SI Priority Areas

Healthcare & digital health

Long-term care & ageing

Housing & homelessness

Skills, training, labor activation



Labour Market Innovation

Youth
Guarantee

Support for
long-term
unemployed

New skills for
green & digital
transitions

Education & Skills



European Skills
Agenda



Micro-credentials
framework



Digital Education
Action Plan

Integrated Social Services



HOLISTIC MODELS COMBINING
HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE,
HOUSING



TERRITORIAL RESILIENCE
APPROACH



FOCUS ON RURAL & REMOTE
AREAS



Housing & Homelessness Innovation

Bottom-linked
governance

Public–NGO
partnerships

Inclusive
models (Vienna,
Madrid)

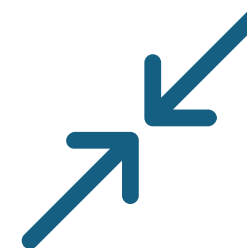
Fair Green Transition



Must be socially fair



JRC assessment of
distributional impacts



SI reduces transition-
related inequalities

Co-Creation in Policy Design



PARTICIPATORY
GOVERNANCE



CITIZENS + INSTITUTIONS
+ CIVIL SOCIETY

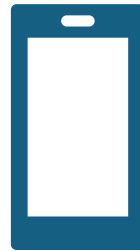


USED IN EU GREEN DEAL
& PRI

Digital Social Innovation



ICT-enabled
participation



CrowdLaw and
digital platforms



Strengthens
transparency & trust



Scaling Through ESF+



Mandatory SI
investment priority



95% co-financing



ESF Social Innovation+
initiative (€197M)

Horizon Europe & Research



Funds governance,
democracy, inclusion



Mission-oriented
innovation

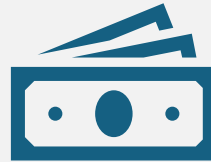


Provides evidence for
scaling

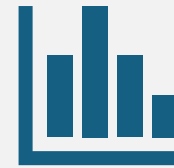
Challenges



DIVERSE WELFARE SYSTEMS
→ ADAPTATION NEEDED



POST-FUNDING
SUSTAINABILITY GAP



LACK OF STANDARDIZED
IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Key Challenges Demanding Innovative Solutions



Demographic Ageing

A rising number of people over 65 and a decreasing number of employees financing the social welfare model, leading to increased demand for healthcare and long-term care.



Rising Inequality

Significant economic and social disparities within and between member states, stretching EU cohesion and solidarity.



Fiscal Constraints

Sobering economic outlook means social spending is unlikely to increase, demanding a focus on *better* spending, not just *more** spending.



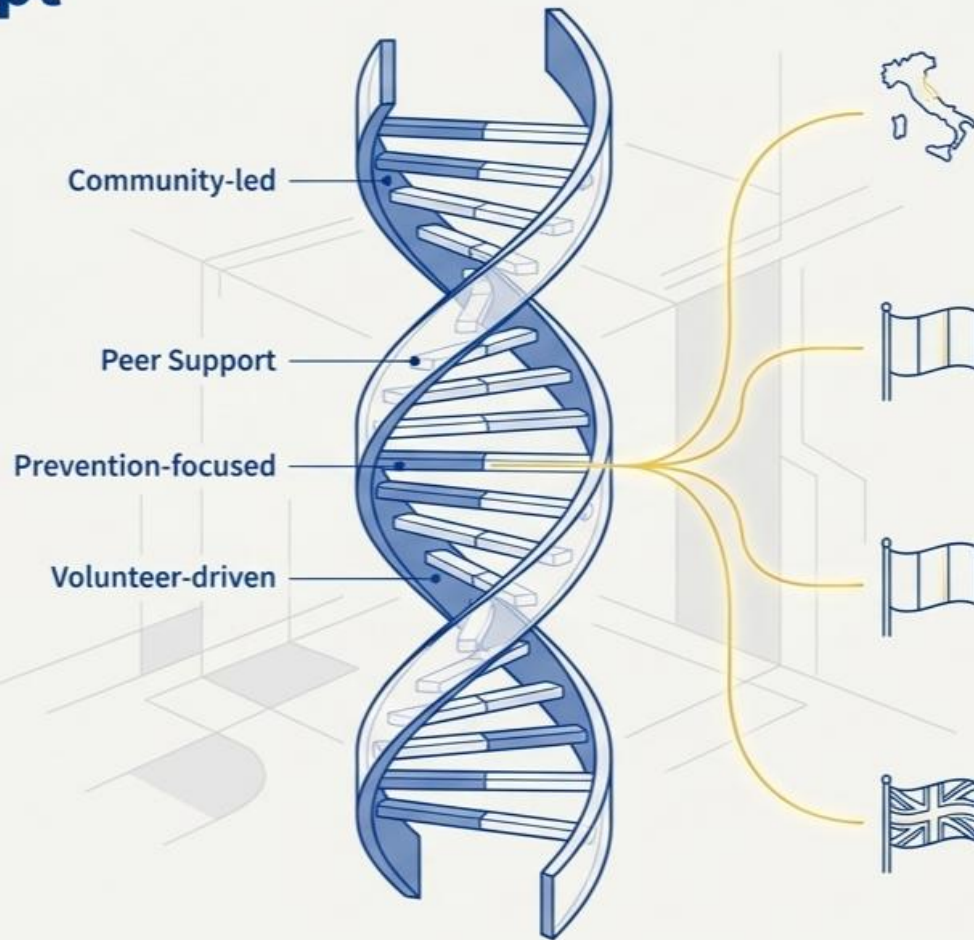
Fragmented Systems

Existing funds and financial instruments are too fragmented, created in response to crises rather than as part of a strategic reflection, requiring additional administrative capacity from countries.

The Evidence: How Good Ideas Spread and Adapt

Policy Transfer

Social innovations develop in similar ways in different places through “policy transfer”—the process by which ideas, policies, and administrative arrangements from one political setting are used in another.



Social Innovation DNA

While precise forms differ due to varying economic, social, and political circumstances, many innovations share a core idea—a “policy essence” or “social innovation DNA”—that allows them to be adapted across contexts.

Innovation in Action: Telephone Support for Social Isolation



UK: Silver Line (2012)

Started after a journalist's article on loneliness. Received a £5 million grant to launch a national helpline.



Ireland: Senior Help Line (1998)

Directly inspired by the Italian model. Grew from 32 volunteers to over 300, operating 12 hours a day, every day.



France: Auboutdufil (2003)

Established after a heatwave caused 15,000 excess deaths. 170 volunteers receive ~5,000 calls per month in the Paris region.



Social Need

Social isolation and loneliness have proven negative effects on health and wellbeing, particularly for older people whose social networks contract.

The Innovation's 'DNA'

A simple, powerful solution using volunteers to provide companionship and a friendly voice over the phone.

Italy (Origin): Filo d'Argento (1990s)

Started by a union of retired people. Grew to 20,000 volunteers and over a million calls per year.



Innovation in Action: Preventive Home Visits

Social Need

Supporting older people to live independently in the community for longer, preventing social exclusion and maintaining health and wellbeing.

The Innovation's 'DNA'

Proactive home visits to older people living alone to assess needs, offer social contact, and connect them to wider services.



Denmark (1996)

Model: Municipality-led program using community nurses for twice-yearly (now annual) visits to people over 75.

Focus: Health in a wider social context.



Slovenia (1997): Elderly for the Elderly

Model: Volunteer-led model (usually older women) started by a pensioners' association.

Impact: Over 300,000 visits from 2004-2012.



Italy (2004): Long Live the Elderly

Model: Charity-led model using volunteers to contact people over 75 by phone and in person.

Impact: Credited with reducing avoidable mortality.



Belgium (2008): Project Solitude

Model: Project in Ghent using volunteers recruited by social workers to connect older people with activities.

Focus: Social, educational, and leisure participation.

Your Social Innovation Resource Hub

Explore the ecosystem, find partners, and discover proven innovations ready for transfer.



Social Innovation Match



Showcase your initiatives, find proven practices from other countries, and search for partners for transnational calls.



National Competence Centres



Connect with your national centre for capacity-building, networking, and support in implementing social innovation actions.



ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative



Learn about EU-wide transnational calls for proposals to develop, replicate, and scale up innovative solutions.



EaSI Strand of ESF+



Explore opportunities for EU-wide social experimentation projects that support the European Pillar of Social Rights.





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