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June 2024 NEWSLETTER SEED - Social entrepreneurship and ecosystems development

The project

Starting this year, six organizations from three countries will join forces to further develop social entrepreneurship in their own region. Together they have successfully applied for an Erasmus+ project, which investigates, on the one hand, how the regional ecosystems of social entrepreneurs can be strengthened and, on the other hand, how students can be encouraged and supported to become social entrepreneurs.

At the end of the project, the partners will deliver the following endproducts:

- Handout to strengthen ecosystems of social enterprises
- Advice per ecosystem
- Overview of learning objectives (units) for a program about Social Entrepreneurship
- Training program for teachers
- Examples of inspiring social entrepreneurs including success factors
- Overview of potential cooperation with stakeholders per learning unit
- Overview of cooperation and exchange with the international partners

The partners will conduct research during three so-called Learning Tours in the Netherlands, Finland and Italy. During a Learning Tour, various stakeholders are questioned, such as local government, social entrepreneurs and educational institutions. Other interesting parties could be: partnerships, specialized organizations in the field of social entrepreneurship, real estate organizations, financiers, etc. In addition, desk research is conducted to gain a well-founded picture of the success factors, challenges and opportunities for the development of social entrepreneurship in the region.

The partners

The following six partners from Italy, Finland and The Netherlands are involved in the project.



Comune di Baronissi – Italy. The Municipality of Baronissi (SA) is located in the province of Salerno, Campania Region, South of Italy. It has a population of about 17,000 inhabitants. The Local Authority has among its missions the economic development of the local community, the socio-cultural growth of the citizenship and the inclusion in the job market of young people.



Essenia – Italy. Located in Salerno and specialized in developing and implementing training programmes and courses as well as in offering career guidance services aimed at performing traineeship within Italian and European companies.



Nova College – The Netherlands. Provides vocational education and training for school-age students and also introductory and advanced vocational education and training for adults. Nova offers more than 130 vocational training courses to approximately 12.500 students in the regions Haarlem, Hoofddorp and Beverwijk, in the west of Amsterdam.



Sakky – Finland. A joint municipal board, owned by 16 municipalities, providing vocational and upper secondary education and training in the North Savo region, East of Finland. Sakky is one of Finland's largest providers of vocational education, executing more than 100 qualifications and catering to around 8,000 full-time students annually.



Samiedu – Finland. An upper secondary vocational education college in Savonlinna that is known as a high quality educator and excellent coordinator and partner in pedagogical development projects. Circa 1900 students, one third studying in vocational education, aged 16-60, for several basic vocational qualifications, two thirds of the total number are adult students either in basic vocational education, further or specialist qualifications or in apprenticeship training.



Stichting Stadsgarage – The Netherlands. Stichting Stadsgarage is a support organisation for Social and Impact Entrepreneurs in the City of Haarlem and Kennemerland region. Stadsgarage develops programs to improve the conditions for social entrepreneurship. It operates as a multi stakeholder platform creating linkages between (social) businesses, local governments, knowledge institutes, financial institutes and other stakeholders relevant in the ecosystem for social business.



The first Learning Tour in the Netherlands

The first Learning Tour was organized between the 13th and 17th of May 2024 in Haarlem, The Netherlands. Stichting Stadsgarage and Nova College were the host partners. On Monday the team started with a self-assessment to establish the state of everyone's knowledge about Social Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands. This was followed by a presentation of the region and a visit of the civil servant responsible for social enterprises of the municipality of Haarlem. An advantage for social entrepreneurs of this region is the current political climate in the municipality. There are left-wings parties in the government of the municipality and left-wings parties are often associated with themes as social equality, sustainability, climate and collectivism. Although there are a lot of opportunities for developing social entrepreneurship in the region, there is not much focus on the role for VET in this.

A strong asset in this region is the cooperation between the municipality and Stichting Stadsgarage. They have agreed on an action plan to stimulate impact entrepreneurship (comparable with social entrepreneurship) in the region. Stichting Stadsgarage is responsible for the execution of this plan in assignment of the municipality. They have frequent meetings about the development of the action plan.

On Tuesday one of the representatives of the local city council of Haarlem joined: Melissa Oosterbroek from Groen Links. She showed her passion to take a leading role in the transition of the municipality towards an even more social, liveable and sustainable city.



During the week the partners visited several social entrepreneurs: Turquoise, SMAAK, Meltup, SpaarneWerkt, Brownies & Downies, Sûr Atelier, NyHavn, Mama Gaia and Juttersgeluk. Their passion was very inspiring for all partners. Social entrepreneurs face challenges in addition to the common challenges for entrepreneurs. For example if they don't *'fit the right box'* within different administrative sectors, they find it hard to get the support to start the social business. Also, the purchasing process might be much more intensive, for social entrepreneurs. The partners saw some opportunities to increase the cooperation between the entrepreneurs and education, for example to execute some assignments or projects by students to support the entrepreneurs.

Thursday and Friday were mainly devoted to education and discussing the next steps in the project and also clarifying the final results the team wants to deliver. On Thursday at Nova College a teacher presented how he tries to inspire and support students to become social entrepreneurs. A more structural approach would be desirable.

On Friday, Maarten Hogenstijn from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA) presented more theoretical knowledge about different research models regarding social entrepreneurship. Maarten also gave insight in the minor Social Entrepreneurship at HvA and shared the first results of another European project, that studies the development of social entrepreneurship skills among primary school students (IDEEC : Impact-Driven Entrepreneurship Education for Children).

Finnish Insights on Social Entrepreneurship in Haarlem

The Finnish team identified several factors crucial for developing social entrepreneurship in Haarlem, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, inspiration, and support structures. Success in this field heavily relies on cooperation with politicians, schools, civil servants, and Stadsgarage. Additionally, showcasing inspirational examples of profitable social enterprises serves as a significant motivator

However, there are notable challenges. Maintaining political support post-elections is a critical concern, as is navigating economic instability. Despite these challenges, there are promising opportunities. The growing need for social entrepreneurship is driven by EU laws and increasing sustainability awareness.

Nevertheless, risks such as restrictive laws and taxes pose potential threats to progress. To mitigate these risks, it is advised to simplify processes, attract financing, and engage actively with the community. One standout example of inspirational social entrepreneurship for the Finish team is Brownies and Downies, noted for their efforts in societal integration of people with disabilities.

Key skills for social entrepreneurs include open-mindedness, innovation, cooperation, and creativity. Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs prioritize societal benefits over mere profit. Educational differences between Finland and the Netherlands also play a role. Finnish schools tend to have less autonomy and a higher proportion of adult vocational students compared to Dutch schools, where there is growing support for social entrepreneurship.

Some important findings of the learning tour

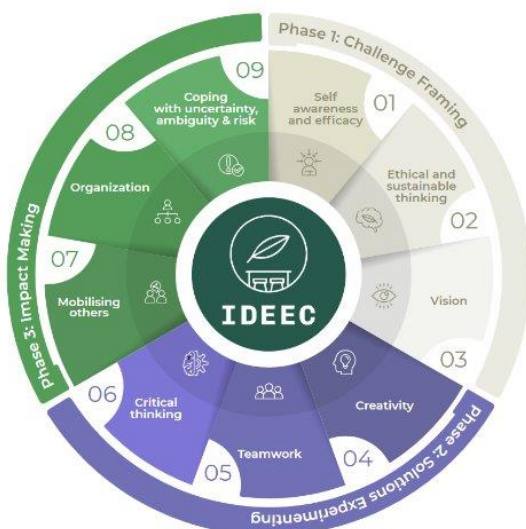
The journey started with a discussion about the definition of social entrepreneurship and how to define the ecosystem of social entrepreneurship. Based on a discussion and research the SEED team chose the following definition:

"Social enterprises are independent companies that provide a product or service and primarily and explicitly pursue a social and/or environmental goal, i.e., want to contribute to the SDGs in an entrepreneurial way."

There are other projects involved with ecosystems around social entrepreneurship, like like [the Scentiss project](#) (27 partners), which maps and analyzes local ecosystems, and the minor in "Entrepreneurship for Society," which emphasizes new economic thinking, impactful learning environments, and transdisciplinarity. Students in this minor work on their own social entrepreneurship ideas, assignments from the ecosystem, or research projects, following a structured process of orientation, design, implementation, and delivery.

Another example is the inspirational program include [the Fawaka project](#) for children aged 9-12 and the [IDEEC project](#), which supports entrepreneurship education for children aged 9-15 across Europe.

The IDEEC competence framework, based on the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework EntreComp, guides the development of teaching materials for vocational education and training (VET) teachers in social entrepreneurship.



The IDEEC Competence Framework

Next steps

The team made already a first draft for a Handout to strengthen the ecosystem of social enterprises. This needs to be enriched with the information that will be collected during the Learning Tours in Finland (October 2024) and Italy (May 2025).

In September 2024 teachers in each country will be interviewed to gather information about the way social entrepreneurship and sustainability are stimulated in the VET schools, the skills and knowledge students need to learn to become a social entrepreneur and how they are being supported.

The projects had already some impact on the partners. For example, improved contacts with the municipality regarding Social Entrepreneurship and more focus on social entrepreneurship in educational programs. There will be more inspiration with more examples and exchange and the SEED participants strive for more impact!